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MARIETTE;

OR,

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FURTHER GLIMPSES OF LIFE IN FRANCE.

A SEQUEL TO "MARIE."

"Why, Sir, 'tis neither satire nor moral, but the meare passage of a history."
JOHN WEBSTER.

"Ah! mon amie, ne le sens-tu pas comme moi? L'Univers et les siècles se fatiguent à parler d'amour."—MADAME DE STAËL.

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BELL & DALDY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.
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PREFACE.

My friend, Madame Mariette, with whom I had hoped to spend some weeks of this autumn, laid down the pen which wrote the further story of her life in France, and of that inroad into Spain which she never tires of telling, with a heart as light as that of M. Émile Ollivier when he went to war. Nothing, she thought, was likely to befal her and hers much worse than that prices should be higher and employment more uncertain.

Instead of my entering her door, she may at any hour knock at mine. She begins to think she has seen more than enough in France, and to long for England, and a home to which she may gather those who may be left to her when the war is ended. She has seen her sons volunteer into the "*garde mobile*," "capering" (as she says), "for joy at the thought of fighting for France." She went with the whole city to see the departure of

these guards—bands playing before them—behind them a population in tears, but singing the *Marseillaise* and the *Chant du Départ.* Her lads told her that she must not look for a letter from them until the Prussian was thrust out of France.

She has gone through the time of false news of the war, and the time of no news at all, and that black Sunday when France learned she had been put to shame at Sedan.

Mariette heard the Mayor proclaim from the *perron* of the Hôtel de Ville, "PARIS EST DEBOUT! DEBOUT LA FRANCE ENTIÈRE!" She heard the wild welcome of the

> "fierce and fair
> Republic, with her feet of fire"—

the shouts and songs which sent the news, as if it were in itself many victories, through every quarter of the city.

She heard the little gutter-boys scream through the streets, "DÉ-CHÉ-ANCE DE BA-DIN-GUET! BA-DIN-GUET PRI-SON-NIER!"*

That very night she saw her own Ernest among the hundreds who went down on their knees in the *Place de la Comédie*, and sang the *Marseillaise*, bareheaded, as in a

* Badinguet, a nickname the *gamins* love to give the Emperor when they dare, is said to have been the name of the workman in whose clothes Louis Napoléon Bonaparte escaped from the prison of Ham.

church; then rose to plant trees of Liberty among the paving-stones by gaslight, and to dance around them and around. She saw them next day look anxiously upon their tender saplings, and, doubtful of their likeliness to thrive, seek out trees of more vigorous growth, and go through similar exercises in the evening; she has made herself a promise that she will not stay to see *this* set of trees cut down.

Mariette has seen her newspaper come out with the old heading, "LIBERTÉ—ÉGALITÉ—FRATERNITÉ," and the date of "*Fructidor, An.* 78," which, in Christian words, means September, 1870. She has been accosted by the girls who bring the bread to her door, and the little earthen pots of milk, as "*citoyenne*," and been told that they did not believe her to be a "*franche citoyenne*," a true lover of the "*patrie*," because she did not look as if she liked that manner of address. "I am no '*citoyenne*,' at all," said Mariette (who clings tight to her title of Madame), "and never mean to be one, but I have given up my sons to your '*patrie*,' which is only half their country, and if they must fight, I would fain have kept one back to fight for England!"

She has seen forty Trappists, headed by their Prior, march of their own free will to defend France, leaving their feeble and aged brethren to say their offices and till their farm. She has seen Ernest's Republican doctor called from the bedsides of his patients in the

Hôtel-Dieu to be made Prefect of Nantes and the Lower Loire.

She has seen the Bretons marching to the sound of their bagpipes, as stubborn in the defence of Paris as they were to resist it in the year '93, and her own words in the pages following have been more than fulfilled, that "the cry of FRANCE would draw Legitimist to Republican, and the man of Alsace (who has little but the name of Frenchman), to the Breton and Provençal who learn French as a foreign language."

EDITOR.

September 24th, 1870.

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MARIETTE.

CHAPTER I

Soon after Christmas, the Breton Count who had married Mr. Lalor's cousin came into Nantes to spend some time at his house near the cathedral. Close by, many of his old friends, who had been "out" in the risings of La Vendée, lived on scant means in still old houses; you might have taken them for houses of professed religion—they were so colourless, had so few windows to the front, and the crowned Virgin above each entrance looked down upon so little of the stir of life, so few comers and goers through the wide doors.

Poor, proud, and polite, these nobles held themselves aloof from the rich and busy new men in the thronged new streets. On their side, the merchants of Nantes took little heed of the cluster of counts and barons round St. Peter's. When touched by politics, the nobles

could be stirred up to describe the citizens as "Atheists and Jacobins," and they to sneer at "the bigots who had not a *sou*."

It seemed a dull life they led on the Cours. None came to them but a few whose want of pedigree was covered by correct views on matters of Church and State, and a vast sense of the honour done them in being received by their betters, unless it were on market-days. Then, gentry from the country and burly village-priests might be seen making their way to the Cours, after putting their horses up at an inn, not far away, which was well known to be frequented by the Legitimists, and would have been under the close care of the police had not the great Préfecture itself stood midway between it and the Cours, overlooking both.

It seemed a dreary life, as well as a quiet one, that they led on the Cours. They had a horror of the past, were out of accord with the present, and could have but faint hopes of the future of France. To be sure the great ladies had more resources than their husbands, who were barred from public life by the poverty following on forfeitures of property, as well as by their allegiance to a king in exile. The ladies had much the same employments they would have had in any case, though they might be on a smaller scale. Though gently watched, they were courted by the powers that were,

and prefect and bishop were always chosen as near as might be to their own standard, save that they called Louis Philippe king, instead of Charles or Henry. It was well understood that the Church gave but passive acceptance to the three days' work of 1830, and that the ties were tender that linked the nobles in their "*quartier blanc*" to the priesthood all over the province. The great ladies held suave little gossipings in convent parlours, and read their letters from Grätz to the reverend mothers; who, in return, would perhaps show them the last vision of Sister So-and-So of the evil things to come on Paris, and the triumph of the white lily. Some of the highly favoured were, now and then, allowed to make copies of these writings, which they would hand about to keep up the spirits of their friends. These dreams, cast into the shape of prophecies, were very like what 'Zadkiel's Almanack' would be if you put church-words into it. They were all much the same. The seer always beheld "blood flowing in the streets of Paris," turmoil and conflict, sickness and famine, Pope and King wellnigh overwhelmed; but, when all was at its worst, the might of Mary drove their foes to a destruction more terrible than that they had seemed about to wreak on all things human and sacred, and the cry of woe always ended in a song of triumph.

No time was ever fixed for these good things coming about, and the Legitimist gentlemen—who, after all,

were Frenchmen—were seldom thought to have a faith simple enough to receive such mystic utterances. They had their part, though, in the letters, and were well pleased to know what kind words were said of them by the Dauphiness, and how the Heir of France was kept mindful of their loyalty, and taught that the word of a Breton was worth gold. Not that they needed aught to keep them firm to their fealty. If delicate praise had been withheld, if the honour of Breton gentlemen could have wavered, memory and family tradition would have kept them true to their old allegiance. As they walked the streets of Nantes, "the stone cried out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber answered it." From the house by the cathedral where Charette was taken, to the warehouses on the quay, no street but had its story of their men trapped in their beds for slaughter, and their women, children, and servants dragged to be drowned. Between the Cours and the open country lay the great meadow where, one day, five hundred children under fourteen had been mowed down by musketry. It was a lighter thing to bear that this Louis, or that Henri, who had always freed his prisoners on their mere word not to fight against the King, should have been denied quarter after fair fight. It was a glorious thing that some had gaily fallen without knowing that the battle was their own!

No wonder that this little remnant should shrink

from the bustling multitudes about them as if they were to-day's representatives of the rabble who had killed their kinsmen. It was true that few of the thriving men of Nantes sprang from the mere ruffians of the Revolution. Such stocks do not thrive. Still they sought what the nobles held to be wrong ends, by what they looked upon as wrong means. After all, it is possible that there was less of difference between the people of the new town and this little group in the old than either supposed. It may be that the gentlemen were just as good churchmen as Breton nobles must be, and not much more devout than the burghers of Nantes, all that seemed over and above being meant to humour their wives and contradict their neighbours. It may be that their politics were family traditions and points of honour rather than points of belief, living and to live. It was a fact, however, that though some likeness in tastes and pursuits might bring persons on the two sides together, nothing but the cry of FRANCE would have drawn Legitimist to Republican, as it would at this day join the man of Alsace (who has little but the name of Frenchman) to the Breton and the Provençal, who learn French as a foreign language.

Mr. Lalor at once fell into a comfortable place in this little society of Legitimists. It was true that he did not concern himself much with politics, but he was of their Church, and his connections were of their class.

His odd little ways were not merely endured—they were enjoyed. "That dear Narcisse was an original," it was said; "that was all." Miss Dennis, who regretted that Mr. Lalor's evening-dress, however well-meant, should always be wanting on some point or other, and who had a clear recollection of having seen him shuffle down in slippers to a *table-d'hôte* breakfast, was amazed to behold him arm-in-arm with dukes and barons. The only improvement his new friends seemed to wish to make upon their "dear Narcisse" was that he should give up his practice of going to *cafés*. This, he was surprised to learn, was not at all the right sort of thing for a gentleman to do in the town where he lived. Those even who were "not of his world" (by which phrase were meant all the merchants, lawyers, physicians, and so forth, of the city) would not compromise themselves by going to *cafés*. To do so would prove them to be reckless of appearances, and only fit to be classed with idlers, or still worse people. A gentleman of Nantes, were he visiting Tours, or any other town, might, however, permit himself to look in at a *café*; and Paris was, of course, another affair. Mr. Lalor yielded, and was taken to a club, which he was told was the proper thing for him to join, but he said he did not find it so pleasant as the *cafés*.

Mr. Lalor liked to bring all his friends together; but not even he, with his ease and freedom, could put my

master and mistress, and some of the English who were most intimate with them, upon anything but a formal footing with his friends on the Cours. To take off all the stiffness, to make most of them glad, and some of them eager, to go where they could meet a learned gentleman who knew all about Brittany, was, to the wonder of us all, done by that gentleman himself, our old friend Mr. Lawson. We had all liked him, but I am ashamed to say none of us had any notion, at that time, that he was, in his own way, a very great man. We soon heard of it when he came to Nantes in the beginning of March. Mr. Lalor met him at our house. Next morning, in he came, with the Count his cousin, and an elderly priest, who both had bundles of written and printed papers under their arms, to demand where the celebrated Mr. Lawson had "alighted." They did not stand on the French rule which requires those arriving in a town to present themselves to those who live in it, but posted off at once to the Hôtel de France, leaving Mr. Lalor with my master, who asked what it all meant.

"It means, Richards," said Mr. Lalor, musing, "that Calyste" (this was the Count) "and the Abbé have both read those papers of theirs on some remains of the ancient Druids in their parish, till there is not a man they know who will stop in the room, if he can help it, when he hears the word 'Celtic.' Now they've got an

opening upon a newcomer, and they mean to use it. The priest says the parson is in deadly error on matters of faith, but that he knows a precious lot more about the mortal errors of the Druids than any writer he has come across. One would think the heresies and schisms of the Druids were matters of saving faith—by the way some folks dispute about them here. It seems, too, that he is what they call an archæologist. They have a society here of Breton archæologists; Calyste is at the head of them, and your friend Lawson is one of their corresponding members."

Mr. Lawson, it seemed, had lived in Brittany when young, and thinking of writing his "Essays on Celtic Remains." He knew very little of the Nantes so well known to my master—that city with so great a commerce of all kinds that it is very hard to tell in what thing more than others its trade lies; but he could talk till he made you think he must have lived in Nantes from its earliest days downwards, and left it about thirty years odd before the present time. He charmed his friends on the Cours by knowing all about their forefathers—"more," they said, with warmth, "than they knew themselves!" Now, in the city, it was supposed that they spent most of their time in talking about their grandmothers, but Mr. Lawson always spoke up in their defence.

"Can you wonder at it," he would ask, "if they *do*

shrink from the townsfolk? It is true, no doubt, that they may appear to confuse the men of to-day with the men of 1794, but it is from a sense that there is nothing but a government reared on barricades to stand between them and the deeds of 1794."

"My master said that, from what he heard on the Bourse, he had a strong belief "that France was now sworn to the King's peaceful reign and to the upholding of order as a means of making money."

So people said in those days, but, a few years later, the news of the flight of the king and ministers sent some of the English staying at Nantes fleeing to St. Malo. Then there was nothing but planting those silly Trees of Liberty, and painting up "LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ" on all the public buildings. I was so weary of such nonsense, for my Ernest was led along to talk like the rest, that glad I was to have the Emperor come in; for he caused the Liberties and Equalities and Fraternities to be carefully painted out, and the trees to be cut down and rooted up. Besides, he stopped the endless talk about politics, which was so tiresome when friends dropped in; and for years and years two men were rash who spoke to each other of State-matters, unless they had walked quite outside the town before they began. Even now the men hardly ever mention such things before the women. Fathers and sons take their time apart to talk about the news in the papers,

knowing that wives and daughters might drop to the priest, or the neighbours, words which would be their ruin. In the days of the Republic, when every one could talk who chose, I used to desire Ernest not to let me hear another word out of those journals; but now I insist on knowing all the nonsense that is talked by himself and his friends, or sent down in print from Paris, as I am not going to have him or my lads led into scrapes for want of my pulling them up. Ernest knows that when I go to confession it is not to tell his sins, so he puts me on my proper footing by letting me know all that passes, and I take care that those belonging to me never do anything worse than talk nonsense. To my own knowledge, everything was cheaper under King Louis Philippe. They say that he robbed France, which may have helped to make things dearer, no doubt; but the Empire costs dear enough, I know; and as for degrading France—which is another charge they bring against him—I, who am only French by marriage, cannot be expected to care so much about that as those who are French by birth. On the whole, the summing-up of the old King's reign by my neighbours, men and women, would be what I have said above in English: "*On mangeait moins cher sous le roi, mais il a volé et avili la France!*"

CHAPTER II.

To do special honour to Mr. Lawson, the Count shortened his stay at Nantes, and returned to his country-seat to arrange a meeting of the antiquaries of his society who were to receive their learned brother from England. Mr. Lawson and Mr. Lalor were to follow him, and stay at his house during this meeting. Mr. Lalor, who saw the underside of things on the Cours, amused us by declaring that his cousin, the Countess, had bargained that the meeting should be thus early, before the weather was at all spring-like, that it might not hinder her half-yearly washing, for which she must and would have the first fine weather.

"I never," said he, "should have supposed that Monica would have grown so fond of a bucking, let alone falling into the queer way of shutting up all the clothes that are soiled in her house in Nantes in cupboards and closets, and drawers and wardrobes, that she may not lose the delight of seeing after their being made clean again in the country."

"Oh, but I must tell you," said my master, "that it is a point of honour with French housewives of the old stamp not to have a washing of clothes oftener than once in six months. If they washed weekly, or monthly, it would look as if they had not had the due dozens of towels and tablecloths which brides should bring with them. Some are weak enough to wash their linen once a quarter, but they cannot look to be so well thought of as if they could hold out for six months. It was much the same in England when old women still spun, and weavers wrought their thread into huge piles of table-cloths and dinner-napkins, such as I can remember in most houses when I was young."

Mr. Lalor persuaded Mr. Lawson to hire a horse and ride with him through part of Brittany before making their visit to the Count. In due time they came back, having become great friends on the journey. We had missed them very much, and were glad to see them again and hear what they had to tell us.

"It's just like Ireland, if you leave out most of the beauties of nature," said Mr. Lalor. "Some would make you believe that it is the fag-end of Ireland, left on this side that day the sea came in and cut up the British Isles into the forms and shapes you see on the maps. I read in a book that the two countries are akin through St. Patrick's own sister, who married the first of their Breton dukes who was of any great

account. He took that virtuous lady to comfort him under his disappointment for the loss of the good St. Ursula, who was coming over from Cornwall to marry him, and bringing 11,000 of her young companions to make wives of for his subjects of the upper classes, when they were martyred by a cruel tyrant, as may be proved by their bones in the cathedral of Cologne. The pigs are like the Irish pigs, long-legged and long-necked; and they run as fast as the dogs. I should think St. Patrick's sister brought them across with her. And they roll so kindly on the mud-floors among the young children, though they are more stuck-up as to their sleeping accommodations than our pigs are in Ireland; and so is the cow and the pony; and the donkey and the goats are just as bad. That is, they do all live under one and the same roof with us poor men and women, but they must each have their own separate bedrooms. Set them up, indeed! As for the sheep, you would think there were none in the country. What there are of them are kept indoors, for fear of the damp air of Brittany, I suppose; for such fogs these eyes never did behold, in England or anywhere else. It is true they cleared off by noon, and we had warm sunshine for this time of the year, but you should have seen them in the early morning! The land is thick with trees grown for fuel, and there are fruit-trees past counting; but no vines where we went.

When apples overabound, they make bad brandy of them; but, in ordinary years, only cyder, which is the common drink."

"You should add," said Mr. Lawson, "that the ways are just the same as in the English cyder-counties. You see the great heaps of apples lying in the corner of some patch of ground by the house, waiting to be pressed, and 'the apple-cake,' or dry refuse after the juice has been squeezed out, piled up to be used as manure, or to be burnt like peat by the very poor."

"I was not brought up among cyder," said Mr. Lalor, "and care for none of it except my cousin's very finest kinds; but true Bretons like it hard and rough, and say that it should cut your throat on its way down it. They pity their betters, the poor do, for drinking cyder out of glass for form's sake. They keep it in stone bottles or vessels, and drink it out of the coarsest ware, saying that it is a sin to drink good cyder except from a rough cup. Lawson and I were in places where there was but one cup among a large party."

"That was little," said Mr. Lawson. "I am old enough to remember when, if you went touring in Scotland, you did not find a tumbler-glass in the good inns; I have seen a single horn serve a large party. Lalor, you must not forget to mention that knives were not 'found' for us in some of the Breton inns, and, where they were, each man seemed more used to eat

with his own knife, which he carried in a sheath at his side."

"And that those knives always left a taste of garlic in the loaf," added Mr. Lalor.

"And that each time a new loaf was begun, the sign of the cross was traced on it with the point of the knife before the first cut was made, as I have seen done in Yorkshire when the new cheese is cut on Christmas Eve."

"And that it was but rye or buckwheat bread, after all. We fare better in Ireland, with the good wheaten bread, and the good potatoes. These poor wretches have little else to eat but rye-bread and buckwheat pancakes!"

"And cakes of buckwheat flour," put in Mr. Lawson, "baked on an iron 'girdle,' such as we use in the North for cooking kneaded cakes or oatcake."

"In winter they enjoy chestnuts by way of change, and, though some parts of Brittany have a great name in the rest of France for producing good butter, Monica tells me that where she lives, she never can eat butter at the fall of the leaves, it tastes so strongly of chestnuts. We had rough living, I can tell you; and when we got to the coast, had to put up with men, women, and children in our sleeping-room, if we would lie in a bed at all. I took to the stables, and wished Lawson here to do the same, but prejudice prevailed with him."

"Suffer me to call it habit," said Mr. Lawson. "It was not so bad. It might have been worse. They set up a screen or two, and you know that they lie down in the greater part of their day-clothes."

"That portion of the fair sex in France which I have had the chance of viewing, when it would jump out of bed at midnight to open doors for my horse and myself, certainly did not need to add to its dress in order to receive us; for it always seemed to have gone to bed in one, two, or three dirty short bedgowns, and three or four dirty petticoats. Lawson, however, should tell you that when I said 'prejudice withheld' him' from sharing my stable, I referred to a queer kind of fuel burned in the common chamber, which made me think he would have been better off where the same thing would indeed have been found, but not in a state of combustion. It was not peat, nor 'apple-cake,' but the manure of the farmyard. We saw heaps of it lying on each side of the house-doors, piled on layers of fern—just as at home in Ireland. They leave the straw in it, let it dry in the sun, cut it into bricks, and use it as fuel. Lawson slept where there was a fire of this stuff, and no more chimney than if he had been in Ireland. The smoke passed through a hole in the roof; or was it through the door?"

"Through a hole in the roof," said Mr. Lawson; "and

the smell was very offensive. Still, with all that, the beds, even in that wild district, were more than tolerable. They were clean, and piled up high and trim. It was clear that great pride was taken in bedstead and bedding. You might cross a mud-floor to reach your bed, but there it stood always clean, often tempting. Would that be sure to be the case in Ireland?"

"By no means, my dear sir," replied Mr. Lalor. "Not even where they were well-to-do. You would find the fine table-covers and the smart-backed books in the sitting-room, and the ragged bedclothes in the sleeping-chamber. Why, I can remember when it was only ladies that could look for clean sheets at an inn, and they might often look in vain. The chambermaid would say that she *did* always try to keep clean sheets for the ladies, but her well-meant endeavours did not always succeed; and my sisters used to tell me they often got one of one kind and one of the other—that is, a clean sheet below them, and a dirty one above. Still, granting the beds (and it's up a ladder you must go before you can get into them), and that the Bretons clump across the floor in wooden shoes instead of going quietly in their naked feet—which you may, if you choose, call proofs that they are more civilised than the poor Irish—I cannot think that St. Patrick (whom some folks I met had the impudence to claim as a

Breton), bore their country so much favour as he did to Ireland, or he would have cleared out the reptiles which abound in it. As for lizards, you can't look at a bank or wall without seeing them in swarms. The ploughs must have come down from the times of those ancient Druids, and a cow or a donkey, or a cow and a pony, are yoked together to draw them. In one place we saw the corn trodden out by oxen, but as a rule they thresh with the flail, and on threshing-floors like ours in Ireland—that is, on flat spaces out-of-doors, where the earth has been beaten and hardened, as it is for the house-floors.* In Brittany they mostly make these threshing-floors on their own land, but sometimes they thresh on the highroad, as is almost always done by the Irish. Indeed, my countrymen almost always choose to thresh where four roads meet, and make the cars turn aside that the work may not be hindered—as why should it be?—though I quite scared all the Frenchmen by telling them of a country where any one would venture to make the *malle-poste* quit the very middle of the king's highway. We have not many trees in Ireland, and Brittany is far too full of them;

* The making of a new threshing-floor is a great festival in Brittany. All a man's neighbours, and bands of young men and women from a distance, come to his help. Music and dancing, feasting, and matchmaking, belong to the making of an *aire* (area), as much as to a fair or a *fête*.

but we saw hardly any thorn-hedges such as we have in some parts of Ireland, or stone-walls to divide field from field. The Bretons raise a bank of earth round every little bit of a field, and all these banks are set thick with trees, which are lopped every now and then. The little cows—for they are as small as those in Jersey — ramble without much trouble over these poor attempts at fences; so, if you have but one single cow, you must employ a girl to mind it; and the little cow wanders about trying to trespass, and the little girl wanders after it to keep it in order, and plies her distaff as she goes. There is no end of little patches of land, for, if your estate is not too big for the nippers of the law to grasp it, it is cut up every time the head of a family dies; so, having no capital, you can only keep one cow or two; and not having enough stock, you have not enough manure; and not having enough manure, you can have no good crops: and yet every Breton aims at having a bit of land of his own, even if it is no bigger than a bed-quilt—partly from love of the soil, partly from not having a spark of faith in the Funds. The Count tells me that he has great trouble indeed to hammer it into the heads of his men-servants that they had far better put their savings into the savings-bank, or anywhere else, rather than buy these shreds and scraps of land at a ruinous rate. Those who are a little above service, and have something to start with, are

even worse than the servants; for I am told that they will pinch and scrape and squeeze, and withhold enough food and clothing from their own poor stomachs, and those of their wives and children, to save money to buy some neighbour's acres that will never pay them their money's worth. When the sum is at last made up, they dig up their silver (for they will have nothing to say to gold), put on their grandfather's Sunday clothes, and go off with their money-bags, proud and happy. The man who wants to sell must clean their money to know what's the sort of it, for it's mostly covered with verdigris from lying long underground. Some borrow money at such a high rate of interest that, if they were not crazy about owning land, they would see they could never repay it. The Count tells me that many of the small farmers in his neighbourhood are what we should call 'in the hands of the Jews.' Still, there seems to be a want of logic in these Bretons, poor things! for, loving land so much as they do, they do not appear to hate their landlords more than it is right and proper, and most likely ordained, that they should be hated in all ages and countries."

"Still," said Mr. Lawson, "though the passion for land borders on mania in both countries, I like the turn it takes in Brittany better than the fashion it assumes in Ireland. The Bretons do aim at getting land by fair means; the Irish want to set up a right to it. One hoards his money till he can buy half an acre; the other ties it

up in an old stocking until he has just enough where-with to flee the country, taking a shot at some one before starting."

"A question of taste and morals," said Mr. Lalor. "But allow me, my dear Lawson, to tell ye, that English and French alike, yourself and my cousin the Count, see Irish matters through the vapours of the steam-press, the fumes of books and papers. I am not a patriot—that is, I am, but not after the fashion of the young fellows nowadays; but I could have joined them when I found Calyste—who has been in hiding and exile, and just missed being caught with the Duchess of Berri at the back of the grate, in that house by the Château there—backing up your English views with his own priggish French reasons, and coolly saying that, in his opinion, Ireland will never improve till England brings to bear on it the civilising remedy of the conscription! It may suit his Bretons; he says it does, and that you cannot imagine a greater change than that made in the rough heavy peasant, sick and sad on being drawn for a soldier, and the smart fellow he comes back. Still, I made out that when he does come back, a free man, he lets his hair grow long again, and puts on his fancy-dress, and holds hard to the soil for the rest of his days; never leaving it of his free will, unless it be to go as a reaper to the centre of France, until his own harvest of buckwheat, apples, and chestnuts be ripe. Now, I leave

Lawson to tell you about the Fine Arts and the Middle Ages, and how his archæologists, being gentlemen and priests of a certain way of thinking, were thought of sufficient importance for some fellows to be sent from Paris to watch their proceedings, and all the rest of it."

"Do tell me first about the washing, Mr. Lalor," said Mrs. Richards. "How did they manage that?"

"Like the Druidesses, I should say," replied Mr. Lalor. "Ye may be sure their method of washing has never been altered. It was not to begin till we left, but I can give you the theory. They fill a huge cauldron full of boiling water and dirty linen. On the top of all, they put a great sackful of wood-ashes; they let it all boil up well together, then take the clothes and give them a good soaping. The poor soap them with raw potatoes, which seemed to me to be saving soap at the expense of good food. Monica, in her days of zeal, when she was newly married, and thought she could improve the ways of the most obstinate people in France, bought a washing-machine to shorten the process. Not a woman about would lend a hand to work it. Now it lies in a garret, and the servants call it 'Madame's plaything.' What you would call 'clothes-pegs' (they call them '*épingles*'), are, it seems, a kind of Parisian invention. They are not to be found everywhere, but are slowly making their way, like other great discoveries. To pass the time, I made a few for Monica. This increased her

own prospects of enjoyment from the great washing, but she doubted that the servants would say, 'Here is another of Madame's little manias.' I do not think, though, that they looked on them with so much disfavour as they did on that machine."

CHAPTER III.

After telling of Mr. Lawson and Mr. Lalor, it seems time I should say something of Miss Dennis. She was by no means a person to let her powers lessen for lack of use. Happily, the time she had to spare from the children and her servants was spent chiefly out-of-doors, and no more of it reserved for us than was needed to set us right, or (as it might be called) contradict us, on most points of housekeeping, the merits of the shops of Nantes, and the distance between this place and that. Allowing for a certain haste in taking up notions, and steadiness in sticking to them, she was a pleasant and helpful companion—especially when her friends were weak and let her take the top, or so clearly richer or higher in station than herself that her well-ordered mind yielded them deference without contest. She would hardly have given up to learning or wisdom without a struggle. People might or might not be clever or knowing, she was pretty sure to hold her own judgment to be better than theirs, her plans and ways

of management such as they would follow if not wrong-headed.

She soon got to know all the English families in Nantes, all the English ladies married to foreigners, and all the Germans speaking English. She frequented their tea-drinkings, she brought her share to their grumblings over French ways and Breton servants, she joined the Protestant sewing-parties, and lent her ear to the pastor, who read aloud while his ladies worked. What they did with their needlework was always a puzzle to me; for you may be sure they did not give it to the Papist poor, and there were next to no Protestant poor in Nantes. Indeed, the greater part of the Protestant congregation could hardly be called Nantais. They were Germans newly come, or the descendants of Germans who had settled at Nantes to trade, and English people who had nowhere else to go, with a sprinkling of French from the south and east of the country, where there are still patches of Protestantism. They stirred little ill-feeling in the town; indeed, the Municipal Council had given them a bit of an old monastery to use for their service.

This was in a very old and narrow street hard by the Cathedral, so that the little colony housed therein on Sundays was as much apart from the rest of the town in spiritual things as the nobles, not a stone's throw from them, were in things political. They were very staunch

to their own way of thinking, and some of them said my master and mistress were as much of Romans as myself, because they would now and then look in at one of my churches, or go to vespers at the Cathedral, where (for I stand up for the credit of those I served from a child) I am proud to say they behaved like good Christians, and better than some Catholics I know of—who would walk into an English church to make game of the service, not treating a building as hallowed unless they can carry on in it and no one besides.

This may seem strange to come from me, and is not, perhaps—or, rather, most likely—what I should have said had I always lived in Liverpool, or stayed with my brother, who was inclined to be strict. But, you see, living with a good master and mistress, who took me about the country—and never gave me a chance of gaining some fervour by saying me nay in any matter of my faith, but would order me to mass, when to go I was most unwilling, having some little thing for their dinner on my mind—and then marrying a French husband, and having lodgers for my worry, I have come to take things as a woman who has seen the world; and, if no one drives or teases me to it, I would as soon go to the Church of England service as to my own. Not that I go to any so often as I should, for by the time I have made my husband, and boys, and four sets of lodgers as comfortable as I know how to make them, it is too

late for the High Mass, and I am tired out. Now and then, when one of my lads gets into some scrape (and, oh! what French-born boys are no tongue can tell!), and I fret myself, and fret Ernest, and we two lie awake all night, Ernest will mildly say, towards the dawning, "My wife, I pray thee to go to mass to-day." You see he advises it, as if it were a draught to calm me; and though I seldom find time to go, it shows me *he* has not lost the faith, though to mass he has never been himself since he went through the wedding-mass on my account.

This rambling talk of mine was started by my heat at what the bitter Protestants said of my master and mistress and Mr. Lawson, who stirred the wrath of pastor and flock by reading the English service to any friends who chose to go to his rooms on Sundays. Miss Dennis managed to go to his prayers, and likewise to the *temple* (as they call a Protestant chapel in France); and though this gave great offence to the pastor, he did not care to quarrel with so active a lady. She had been used to help the clergy, and was full of zeal and activity. All the time she lived in Nantes she was the life of the ladies' meetings, and threw herself into the projects of the pastor and his curate for building a larger temple in a better situation, and longed to improve the singing, and was quite ready to have played the organ if the head-pastor had dared to wound the self-love of the organist.

As the Protestants were not numerous, it now and then was quite a trouble to find a bride or groom when the time came for arranging marriages for their sons and daughters. Long negotiations would take place, by word and in writing, and husband or wife be found in some other Protestant congregation far south or east. So firmly did they hold to their children keeping to their own faith!

Yet I never could see that their young men grew up at all unlike ours. So long as one set were with their mothers and confessors, and the other with their mothers and pastors, both were good boys; but, in France, there comes a day when all that goodness goes no one can say where. After young lads mix with young men, they, for the most part, leave it to the women to fill the churches and temples. Not but that a good preacher can bring them in crowds to hear him, and, in some places, there is more devotion than in others—indeed, I fancy that middle-aged and elderly men now go more to church than they did when I first knew France—still the not going is the rule. The change in keeping Sunday is more plainly to be seen, and dates from the coming-in of this Emperor. In the King's time, and still more under the Republic, work of most kinds went on just the same on Sundays as on working-days. Some shops were closed, more were open. If you stood on the quay, you saw the ships

being laden and unladen. Now, the customs-officers would prevent a captain setting his men to such work, unless he could show them some good reason for it—such as that his cargo would perish were he to delay.

Biddy, whose turn comes next, was now in what she called "high favour and fortune; and thanks to you, Mary, for the same, and it's something I feel warm down here, when I think of ye." As she said this, with tears streaming down her cheeks, she laid her hand on the pit of her stomach. It was my master and mistress she should rather have thanked, and so she did also, comparing them to all the saints she could bring to mind. They had apprenticed her eldest boy, and put the others into the way of earning a few francs, and given her warm clothing. Some of her neighbours called her Madame Noonan now, and she held up her head on Sundays in as white a cap, collar, and cuffs as any one could show, when she took her walk with Ernest and me to make us look proper. Ernest had shown himself more and more favourable to me. I made light of it, saying that he was a Frenchman, and only a boy besides, seeing that he was two or three years younger than myself. As for being a Frenchman, that he, of course, made out to be a very great advantage. As for my being the elder of the two, he flatly declined to believe it, but added that (had it been the case) in his mother's country, about forty miles from Nantes—where

the farmers had such fine weddings that it was a fashion for the folk of Nantes to journey there to see them go to church in their old costumes—it was thought a bad match if the bride were not older than the bridegroom. His mother coming to the town one market-day, he brought her to see me. She and Biddy held a parley over me, part of which Biddy made known to me. Some, I suspect her of keeping back, for if I know Biddy, she would be sure to tell the old woman that I had savings, and was as dear as their own child to a very rich master and mistress who had no family. She did tell me that she had said I could do all kinds of work, and was discreet, and of the right religion. Madame Trévorec—who was a vigorous, worthy-looking countrywoman, from time to time nodded in sign of approval—remarked that I was well-looking, and asked my age. She made no excuse for doing so. She had come on business, and did her work in a plain and serious manner. On being told that I was five-and-twenty, an age at which the French consider old-maidenhood to have set in, she cried out, in the most civil manner, "Ah, Holy Virgin, how wanting in sense must the men have been in England!"

Biddy, to keep up my credit, said that had by no means been the case, but that I had, perhaps, been a little hard to please, having such high claims. The old lady then said that she thought it was time her son

should be settled in marriage, and gave her consent, and that of the family, winding up with a serious entreaty that Ernest and I should court in a discreet and decorous manner, and, above all, never be seen out-of-doors without the company of a respectable third person.

"And it's I'll go wid' you," cried Biddy, "if you're not ashamed to be seen with a cripple like me. A poor cripple I may be, but I'm a wife, or a widow, or it may be a bigamist; for its odds but that bad man has six or seven Mrs. Noonans by this time, though he'll never find one to scrub a floor so hearty, and with the links of her back put out besides."

CHAPTER IV.

After this, from Biddy to my master and mistress, all took it for granted that some day I should marry Ernest. I could not say that I was unfavourable to him, or that, seeing it to be the custom of the country for the fathers and mothers to mess and meddle with the marriages of their children, his mother had shown herself anything else than civil, and even flattering. Still, I did think it was my lot to be in some degree pushed, shoved, or driven into engagements to marry without my having given my own consent to my own self. As there was just a chance that, at some odd moment when I had not enough to do, I might marry Ernest, I held it better not to say a word to him about my flight from the Isle of Man. In this Biddy quite concurred. I added that I often felt ashamed of the poor affair I had made of it at Douglas, and what a thing it would be if they all joined against me, and teased me into naming the wedding-day, and then something were to rise up in me, and pull me back, when the priest had been

spoken to, and, may be, had even looked out one of his old wedding-sermons to preach over Ernest and me, and I were to run away again, and, perhaps, go much further."

"Mary Ryan," said Biddy, "if I could find it in my heart to dirty my fingers with giving advice in such concerns, I should just tell Ernest to give you a rival, or the make-believe of one, this very hour. But far be it from me to spare any man his courting-pains. Now, put on your cap, and come and tease him to your heart's content."

I did not do more than just try him a bit to find if he thought himself secure of me. Ernest is in some things not at all like our notions of a Frenchman, for he is not hot and hasty of temper; and, though gay, not a quick or constant talker. I sometimes think him shrewder than I permit him to claim to be. He took good care not to seem too sure of me, and made out I must have left others behind me wherever I had been, who were as anxious as himself to gain my good will. "There *must* be many of them," he said. Well, there may have been some, but I never had enough mind to any of them to give myself the trouble of making that mind up.

I hinted that this kind of nonsense might do very well to make the time go by, but that he was of an age when youths fancy they like women older than themselves. If, as he made out, he wished for an English

wife, there was Sarah, who lived with Miss Dennis. She was nineteen, so she said. "He could not think of her?" "Why could he not? Any one would say he did! The last time she was ill, had he not brought her some strong soup of his own making?"

"That was chiefly to have an excuse for coming up our stairs, and a chance of seeing me."

"Oh, indeed! but Miss Dennis did not take it in that way, for I heard her tell my mistress that she 'meant to shut her eyes to what was going on between Sarah and that young Frenchman. It would be a good thing if it rid her of the girl without any expense in sending her back to England.' Besides, how could he know what effect that strong beef-gravy soup might have had on Sarah's hopes and feelings?"

Ernest looked puzzled, but men, and Frenchmen, smile kindly on the natural and proper effects of their attractions. He said he would be more careful in future. He had thrown no hidden meaning into that *bouillon*. When he made it very strong, it was only with a thought of fortifying her body, and of giving her courage for her work, for she seemed to him to be *très-fainéante*.

I do believe that he left me in high spirits, flattering himself that I had shown a little jealousy, but my master and mistress, who passed him on the stairs, took me to task for sending that poor young man away so downcast, and Biddy asked what it mattered for whom

he made soup, so long as he gave me all the sweets? Sweets he did bring me in plenty, some of his own making, for he could turn his hand to pastry, and cakes, and comfits, though the same man seldom cooks a dinner and makes them too, in France. If chocolate in all kinds of forms could have won my heart,—or little cakes, that looked quite simple on the outside, but were filled with some delicate jelly,—or nicely-flavoured syrup, to the pleasant surprise of your mouth,—or what in England would be mere common sugar-candy, but in France has some dainty flavour of vanilla, or orange-flowers,—if all these could have roused my feelings, all these he brought me, and many more besides.

Now I do not mind telling, as it is all so long gone by, what I did want to warm me up was some fine big obstacle. Even a little bit of contradiction might have worked wonders for Ernest, but no person or thing would be kind enough to come between us. Ernest had taken notice of me from the very first; I had no dislike to him to keep him in my mind, and hold me thinking of him till I thought myself round to liking. If he had made up to others, or was doing so now, no one had the Christian kindness to let me know it. His mother, instead of setting up her back against it, as is the custom in our country, had put on her best cap and come in from her village to make the offer for him. My master and mistress, who might perhaps have shown

a higher value for my services by making things a little unpleasant (not that I complain of them in any way, but it would have looked better for me if they had set themselves against my marrying), would even, when I sometimes drove him from the kitchen, ask him into their sitting-room. Mr. Lawson, who had met him there, said he could pick up many things from Ernest, and talked with him by the hour at a time. No little cross or contradiction was thrown in my way, unless by Miss Dennis, and she was not my mistress. She did maintain, in her obstinate way, that it was her Sarah he was seeking, after Mrs. Richards had assured her again and again that she was under a mistake. Still this was not enough to give my courtship, if you can call it a courtship, much interest. So I could not give my mind to it, but made light of the whole concern; and when Ernest wanted to make pretty speeches to me would say what came first into my head, anything to tease him, such as asking him to be good enough to tell me how to cook some snails for my master, who was very fond of those dainties. This would have driven some men furious, but I dare say he soothed his self-complacence with the thought that I dwelt on cooking because he was a cook. So far from seeing anything laughable in cookery he thought it a very great and serious art, "the most important and leading branch of chemistry." In his mouth his pots and pans

were "culinary vases," his fire demanded "continual aliment," he did not carve a fowl, but "dissected it;" when he cut off the top of a turnip he "uncrowned" it, and when he salted a bit of beef, he did not just let it lie in the pickle, but "permitted it to remain for ten days in a state of complete repose" before he hung it up in the chimney to be smoked by the wood fire.

At first I hardly knew whether to laugh at these fine phrases or to think him very clever and well-taught, but soon I began to make out that the French are all born with fine sentiments ready for use, and easily acquire a neat way of putting them into words. Besides, many of the pretty little phrases and turns of speech which strike strangers have perhaps been current in the country for ages, and if ever there was a language that lent itself to making your sense sound more sensible, and your wit more witty, it is the French.

The French liking for snails is one of those loves below their own degree of which most people are a little ashamed, and half try to conceal. Now and then, when the gentlefolks take a fancy to hold a snail-feast, there is some trouble to find an artist who will stoop to dress it. Ernest, however, treated it as an opportunity of showing what Art could do with the most ignoble materials. So next Sunday morning he took Biddy and me to the snail-market, which, with that for flowers, was held at the Bourse. Brokers and merchants every

Sunday left that noisy haunt of barter and traffic to the soothing influences of the emollient and nutritious snails and the lovely and odorous flowers. Ernest chose some fine, fat, white vineyard-snails, "the only kind of which," as he said, "the usage could be permitted." This Biddy scouted, telling him that, for her part, she liked any of them, and dressed in any manner. Though Ernest could only stoop to a vineyard-snail, no doubt the poor eat any they can come by, for often have I seen them outside Nantes poking them out of old walls and hedges with an iron hook. I felt I must allow a few airs to a man and a cook, who so wished to stand well with me that he was glad to take off my hands the unpleasant task of cooking snails. Biddy, however, only made fun of his professing scarcely to know that such things were eaten, and went on to ask him if he did not think a squirrel dressed like hare excellent eating? and what sauce he liked best with stewed hedgehog? and if he did not think a cat more delicate than a rabbit? All these are dainties of the poor, though cookery-books overlook them, and cooks shrug their shoulders at their name.

Ernest took his snails to the hôtel, and, after a deal of trouble—for they require from a week to a month for cleansing—he stewed them in some rich gravy, and made them into what the French call a *vol-au-vent*, or rich, light puff, which he brought for me to set before

my master. I could not but admire it, for the paste had risen full six inches in the oven, and, though I am certain I myself could make light pastry with both my hands tied behind my back, here was a touch beyond mine, and I was not jealous of him, as he was only a man. So I praised him freely, and he said that "now indeed, I was an *aimable Mariette*" (which last word is short and endearing for Mary), "and, that if I would but prize his heart as much as I did his flaky pastry, his utmost wishes as a man would be gratified, as well as his just self-love as an artist." "I don't know much about your heart," said I, "but I can see your pie-crust."

Therewith I ran to my master, who so highly relished the dish, that he said if I would persuade Ernest to cook for him, he would give Mr. Lawson and Mr. Lalor a snail breakfast.

Ernest gave a few twirls on the floor, as if dancing for joy, at the thought that this would bring him a good deal into my kitchen, and declared that he would not only do it, but would compose a new dish in my honour, which he would name something or other *à la belle et douce Marie.*

"You'll not find me *douce*, I promise you," said I; "if you dare to mix my name up with any dish that has snails in it. You are more likely to find a dish-cloth pinned to that fine white pinafore of yours."

So Biddy and I scoured all our pans anew, to keep up our credit, and Ernest scoured his snails; and, when he had completed what he called "the operation of their *dégorgement*," he had his hair frizzed, and a twirl given to his moustache, put on a clean white cap and apron, and a smart new necktie, and presented himself in my kitchen with both hands full of little saucepans, for it seemed that my "culinary vases" were not enough in number or quality for so accomplished a cook. I was kept busy waiting on the party, so only had time to throw a few words at him now and then to keep down his conceit, as one pokes the fire in passing.

The repast began with a *potage aux escárgots;* I give the name in French, as it sounds so much better than snail soup. Mr. Lawson, who came disposed to taste (let me call it the "escargot," as more genteel), in every way in which it could be cooked, and, if possible, to like it, told us this soup took him back to his schoolboy days, when straying with his brother on a wild moor in the north of England they fell in with gypsies at a meal, who seeing the lads to be wet and weary, offered them hot soup, which they ate with great relish, until coming to the bottom of the pipkin, they fished up some snails. "I shuddered then," said Mr. Lawson, "but this soup is much better flavoured than that of the gypsies, and one outlives prejudice."

Mr. Lalor did not look as if he had yet outlived his

prejudices. He applied himself with some vigour to the excellent white wine of the country, which Ernest had begged might be drunk at breakfast unmixed with water, as snails ought to swim in pure wine.

After the soup, came a dish of fried snails, "arranged with sauce, and reposing on a couch of garlic." Little wooden skewers were laid by each guest wherewith he might spear and seize his snail. Then there were snails stewed (like lampreys), with onions, raisins, and prunes, and snails grilled in their shells, and served with butter and lemon-juice, and snails stewed with white wine and mushrooms, and stuffed snails, and a dish of snails much resembling scalloped oysters; Ernest had not permitted himself to vary the banquet except with a few frogs. They appeared with the snails, in a grand *ragôut*, and by themselves in a little dish which he had dedicated to me under the name of "*pattes de grenouille à la jolie Mariette,*" which means, if you please, "the pretty little Marie's own dish of frog's feet." I did deign to taste it when I took it out into the kitchen, and it was very nice; but how could I tell if frogs were nice or not when he had put eggs and butter, gravy and wine, spice, and what he called a *bouquet garni*, but I, a faggot of savoury herbs, into the sauce?

Every one was warm in praises of the skill with which he had varied the breakfast. They sent for him to receive the thanks of the company, and to drink a

glass of Madeira. He was not awkward, but made quite a nice little speech, in which he disclaimed any unusual gifts of nature, and said that "the repast which had been happy enough to merit their approbation, was simply the result of thoughtful, patient, and conscientious studies in an art to which he had consecrated himself both as his profession and from enthusiastic love; to which he had both an inner and an outer calling."

CHAPTER V.

"I LIKE this white wine," said Mr. Lalor; "what a relish it gives to oysters! How heady it is, and yet it's not a quarrelsome liquor like the whisky,—I can't help thinking it's a great promoter of the *égalité* and *fraternité* they talk so much of hereabouts. It puzzled me a good bit on first coming here. You know that beyond my house by the *octroi*, there's a little town outside the town, round the great *fabriques** (as they call them), you might call it a suburb of pothouses, for the *cabarets* come to much the same thing. As my neighbours at the *octroi*-station charge just the same toll on the thinnest as on the richest wine that is brought into Nantes, the poor fellows of workmen, to save a *sou*, will flock to these drinking-booths. There

* The suburb of Ville-en-bois contains the *fabriques* for preserving fruit and vegetables which are among the chief sights of Nantes. They, for the most part, have larger *établissements* by the seaside, for curing sardines. At the Ville-en-bois one may see a ton of green peas weighed, shelled, weighed again, and soldered in tin boxes, in a single day. These *fabriques* are, after all, the speciality of Nantes.

they can get something like a pint of wine for a half-penny. I used to see troops of them on Sunday evenings reeling back to Nantes, shouting and whooping as if they were so many Irish, but many of them arm-in-arm, or embracing one another instead of cracking each other's skulls. There they went rolling against each other through the streets, shouting at the top of their voices, or singing, but really in fair time and tune, considering, and with the tone and gestures of the theatre. English policemen would have had them all in the lock-up, but here, where they look after the least little bits of your life, and make laws for them, where my friend and fellow-countrywoman, Mary Ryan, cannot shake her duster out of the window without the landlord coming to say that his other tenants have complained of the nuisance, where my own landlord was fined last year for neglecting the *échenillage* of his garden, which means, I am told, not having all his trees and hedges, shrubs and flowers, cleared of all manner of slugs, grubs, and insects, the police take no manner of notice of these fellows making night noisy.

"Then, on work-days, you see the men of a morning lying about in every corner, in every conceivable posture, mostly looking as if they were dead-drunk. No one takes the least notice of it, and, when at length you find some one who can answer a question put in English, he says, "It is nothing, monsieur, it is only

the good wine of Vallette." I may add, that in about an hour they sleep it off, get up, shrug their shoulders, give a twist to their moustaches, and go to work again, to all appearance greatly refreshed."

"The police," said Mr. Richards, "know that they will do nothing worse than wake people from their first sleep. We, in the town, are used to it. We hear a chorus—"*Jamais, jamais en France l'Anglais ne régnera!*" We turn in our beds, and we say 'that's the white wine.' Did not one of your countrymen say of champagne that it had one fault, you were no sooner tipsy on it than you were sober again? It's the same with the wine of Vallette. I call it the *vin aux sabots*, for not only does it make the wooden shoes clump louder and faster over the paving-stones, but I've seen the peasants treading it out in their patches of vineyards with their *sabots*. A great deal of it is shipped to Cognac to be made into brandy, and to Bordeaux to be dyed with logwood."

"In some parts of the continent," said Mr. Lawson, "they grow dark-flowering hollyhocks for the same purpose. I recollect once, on the Rhine, seeing cartload after cartload pass my windows, until I became so curious to know what was to be done with them that I followed a waggon till I saw it enter the courtyard of a large distillery, and then I concluded the blossoms were used to colour the white wine, for there were hardly

any purple grapes in the neighbourhood, but plenty of red wine."

"The Count," said Mr. Lalor, helping himself to another glass, "warned me that the snail, though an extremely useful article of diet for a short time, in the same way as cod-liver oil, was a heavy and indigestible viand, but with this *muscadet*, for that's what I was told to call the white wine, and that young fellow's good cooking, I have no fears for my digestion."

"You ride and walk too much to fear," said Mr. Richards; "but you come less into the town than you used to do."

"The fact is," said Mr. Lalor, "I am trying to improve my French, and, as I can't sit long over a book, I have engaged one of the men at the *octroi* to take country walks with me and talk as we go. I am now on excellent terms with all the "*Qu'as-tu là?*" as the little street-boys call them. I point out a nettle in a hedge, and he tells me they call it an *ortie*, and so on. He has nightwork only, which seems to have shaken his nerves, or else he has acquired a habit of distrusting mankind, or else he expects the general rush of an indignant population to take his life in return for all the halfpence he has taken from its pocket, for he never goes outside the barrier without a loaded pistol in his pocket, and, if a dog runs out barking, he has out the pistol in a minute, and, if we are out towards dusk, he

seems all in a fidget. Besides these walking studies, I often drop in at the *octroi*-station, and sit with the old fellow, who is head man. He says I lighten his *ennui*, for he has to sit all day in what I might describe as a shop without any goods in it. There's a counter, a desk, bills ready for filling up, pens, ink, and paper, weights and scales, and nothing to weigh but what has to pass the barrier. He charges duty on all the meat and so forth taken into the town, which he has to give back again in case the buyer lives outside. I pick up odds and ends of French, and see rags and tatters of human character. Strange things happen, I can assure you. I had often noticed a devout female who went into Nantes every morning in time for early mass. It seemed far for her to walk, for if not already the mother of a family, she seemed on the point of being so. One morning, as I stand on the doorstep, she comes toiling back from the town, out springs a dog, and jumps at her skirt, catching it in his teeth, she drives him off with her umbrella, but he is back in a second, barking and catching at her gown. I run to her help, and my friend the head of the *octroi* comes out to see what is going on. In a minute he makes up his mind that the dog has good reasons for his conduct. He has her into his office, and that pious female, sir, was found to have a girdle round her waist, to which she had slung great lumps of raw pork and pounds of tallow candles. She

was fined, and there was a great change in her figure after that. My friend made many jokes about it, which were I to repeat, you would blame the white wine. It turned out that she was the wife of a butcher who had run the barrier, night after night, to take meat into the town; he had been fined over and over again, but still risked it now and then. This devoted wife, however, took the meat in every morning under her petticoats, and made up her figure to the same size for returning with groceries or other marketings. Why she brought back pork that day was that some customer had bolted, and so she was forced to bring it home. After that, the man was forbidden to keep a butcher's shop anywhere all round Nantes; but his wife gained more credit with her neighbours as a smuggler than she had been able to do as a devotee. You pay on cooked meat, too, which strikes one as hard; but the whole thing is absurd. I saw a scene the other day about a pretty little kid, just the size of a sucking-pig. Some one in Nantes had bespoken it from a countrywoman, and agreed to pay her three francs. She comes to the barrier with her kid, and they tell her she must pay two francs duty on it. She says that then it will be thrown upon her hands, for that her customer will never consent to pay two francs more. They took pity on her, and told her how to manage. They must charge two francs if the kid were entire, but if she would take it home and cut

off the head and feet, it might then pass as meat, paying about a halfpenny on each pound. So we took charge of her kid while she tramped off to get her customer's consent, and the kid was sent in at last in joints as meat."

When breakfast was over, Mr. Lawson said he would show my master a curious ancient cross-bow, with long, sharp, slender arrows made for the express purpose of shooting frogs. I ought to explain that Mr. Lawson had, since he sent off so many boxes full of curiosities from Bordeaux, picked up so many more that we had lent him our share of the garrets, at the top of the house, to store away his packing-cases till his return to England. Up they all went, and opened a box full of weapons and old armour; for, as Nora Dennis said, Mr. Lawson liked every kind of "oldity." After looking at the little cross-bow for shooting frogs, Mr. Lalor got hold of another meant to shoot men. He handled it, and Mr. Lawson showed him how it was worked.

"I can't believe this would carry any distance," said Mr. Lalor; "I should sooner put my trust in a sling and a stone."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Lawson, picking up a fossil that lay on the floor, "just try."

Mr. Lalor opened the window and looked at the fine view of the port, then took aim at nothing in particular, and let fly his stone-bolt. Far away, above lower roofs

rose a convent. In an instant, Mr. Lalor had crashed one of its windows. All three gentlemen drew back in a hurry from their window, and Mr. Lalor squeezed himself up into a corner of the room in such a grotesque state of alarm and horror, that Mr. Lawson said afterwards that he put him in mind of the old story of the man who shot a great owl, and feared that he had committed sacrilege and incurred the heaviest censures of the church by shooting a cherub.

CHAPTER VI.

JUST to get rid of Ernest, that we might clear the kitchen, I went part of the way downstairs with him, and stood a minute or two talking, just to let him know how much the gentry had liked their breakfast. When I went back there was that little Harry Dennis sitting on Biddy's knee, and she riding him to market in the French way, singing:

"Quand Monsieur va à Paris
Il va sur son cheval gris.
Le pas, le pas, le pas,
Le trot, le trot, le trot,
Le galop! le galop! le galop!"

Now, as there was but a landing between us and Miss Dennis, those children would never have been out of our kitchen, for the sake of change and of seeing their old nurse Biddy, if their aunt had not set herself against it, and I had not done my part to back her. Biddy thought it was done to hinder them from loving her, and would talk herself into tears about it; but I knew their aunt

was afraid Biddy would spoil their meals by giving them nice things from our cooking, or, worse still, *bonbons*, or, worst of all, what my master called "spiritual *bonbons*," that is, little gaudy pictures of saints, with little bits of reading at the back of them, wrapping up Roman doctrine as the jam hides the powder. So I frowned at Biddy, who chanted her boy another rhyme before she replied to my look:

"Papa est en haut,
Qui fait du cacao.
Maman est en bas,
Qui fait du chocolat."

"Now, Mary, this time it's the aunt has sent him herself. Sarah is having one of her turns, and the cook has gone to fetch Miss Nora from school, so she wants you or me to help to put Sarah to bed."

Up we both went, and found Miss Dennis quite tired with struggling with Sarah, who was kicking about on the floor in a fit of hysterics. When we went in, Miss Dennis sat down and begged us, if we could, to get Sarah to bed, where it would be easier to compose her. "I have ordered her to rise," said she in a wearied voice, "I have tried to help her up, I have begged her to exert herself, I have tried fresh air, and burnt feathers, and smelling-salts, and 'Eau de Cologne,'——"

"Ye should have thried the wather-jug," said Biddy, seizing it, and, in an instant, emptying it over Sarah's

head and shoulders. It had a surprising effect. Sarah jumped up, and, with an angry inquiry as to whether that were "a proper way to treat English servants in a foreign country?" ran up to the top of the house, where she barricaded herself in the attic-room allotted to Miss Dennis. Biddy chuckled, and I could not help laughing, but Miss Dennis never saw any of the fun in things. She now decided on sending for a doctor, who should say how much of all this was pretence. As I had had nothing to do with the water-jug, I went in search of Sarah, who was very sulky. At first she would not speak, then she would only tell her grievances through the keyhole; but on my representing that Biddy had gone back to her kitchen, and that she had much better put off her wet clothes, and lie tidy in her bed to see the doctor, she did at last come down to her room, and let me undress her and put her to bed, doing nothing for herself but pity herself, and giving me the most harassing accounts of her feelings, or what they now call "sensations." I never knew any one who had more of those bad things than Sarah. To listen to her you would have thought she was made in a different form to any one else, and that the nature of things changed when she came in contact with them. After seeing her thump her head about on the floor, I could suppose that she had a bad headache, but when she told me she "felt sinking through the bed," I asked her how that could

be, when she lay on a good bed and mattrass, with a strong bedstead under all. She replied that she felt the bedstead tremble beneath her, and that no one but herself could understand her feelings.

A doctor came and saw her, and pronounced that her discomfort was caused by her liver being upset. This, she said, she herself could have told, for she had often felt it turning over and over; but it was being too hard-worked that had brought it about. He did not make enough of her illness to please her, but he did say she must take some medicine and keep in bed till he saw her again. Miss Dennis had given her cook leave to go out that evening, and was herself going to a concert with my master and mistress, so that she was very thankful to have Biddy spared to mind the children, and me to sit with Sarah when I had seen my mistress off. By that time, however, Biddy had either made her peace with Sarah, or awed her into stillness; for when I went upstairs, I found Sarah meekly swallowing some hot cabbage-soup which Biddy, after the French custom, had brought her to aid her medicine.

It was a grand night for Biddy, being the first time she had had the children freely with her since Miss Dennis came to Tours. I am afraid she spent a good part of it in putting them questions which would have made her uneasy had they been answered as she seemed to wish. She wanted to make out if "the aunt" did

not unduly prefer the little boy, and were not over-strict with both the children. Nora, out of perverseness, and from real liking also, stood up for her aunt. This vexed Biddy, but it stood to reason that the child must like an aunt who kept her active mind and body thoroughly employed, and let her share, as much as she could, in all she herself did or enjoyed. As for Harry, he made two complaints; one was that "every time aunty had her's tea she would not let him not say anything" (which meant that he was not allowed to chatter at meals); the other that, by-and-by, she meant to send him to school, and he "didn't want, no not never, to go to school."

"You little rogue," said Biddy, "you know there's a man there will cane you."

"I ain't not a little rogue, and I shall ask aunty to put me back into 'peccoats.'"

Poor Harry seemed seriously to look upon petticoats as armour of defence.

Nora now began to tease Biddy to make Harry *faire do-do*, which is the French nursery-slang for putting children to sleep; so, in spite of his protests, he was rocked on Biddy's shoulder, and so sleepy a rhyme crooned over him that I almost dozed myself while Biddy kept repeating:

"Do, do, do,
L'enfant dormira tantôt."

When he was laid in his cot, Biddy and Nora, who felt bound to do something naughty while Miss Dennis was out, set to work to make orange-flower candy, and burnt a pan, and did other mischief of which they were often told afterwards. I slept in Sarah's room that night, and Biddy looked in upon us, bringing Sarah some wholesome drink which she called *ptisane*, and shaking up her pillow very kindly. She asked Sarah how she felt by this time. On Sarah replying that she had "an uncommon bad taste in her mouth," Biddy could not help saying, "and no wonder, with such a bad tongue as you keep in it." I could have thanked Biddy to have held her own tongue, and not set Sarah's loose to keep me awake, telling me, as she did till midnight, how as soon as she was well enough to leave the house she should go to the English consul, that she should, and call upon him to send her home to England at the expense of her mistress.

In a day or two the doctor made out that there *was* something the matter with Sarah, which *did* make her unfit for work, though why she should put on fits, or put herself into them, to conceal it is beyond me. Only I can give my guess that she was cunning enough to know that she would have found it hard to get a place, still harder to be brought to France, and hardest of all to be sent back at the cost of Miss Dennis, had she been frank enough to own to an old complaint in her legs

which had now broken out again so badly that it was really wrong for her to use them. She made a good fight up to the last, I must say that for her. She denied she had ever before had her legs bad, and she blamed the hard work she had had with Miss Dennis for bringing on the ailment. The doctor knew nothing about her work, he said, but she must not tell *him* it was her first attack, when she had so many marks of previous treatment. He advised Miss Dennis to have her moved to the hospital; he would get her admission. Miss Dennis was herself again. Sarah had puzzled and worried her more than you would have thought any thing so silly could have fretted any one so firm. Now she knew herself to have been taken in, she was all life. She had Sarah's things packed up, under a running appeal to the laws of England and the British consul, issuing from Sarah's bed. She had her French cook in to dress the girl. Françine seemed to do it with a few twists and jerks, then she slightly smeared Sarah's face with a towel, clapped on her bonnet and shawl, half carried, half-pushed her downstairs, crying, "*Courage! courage!* don't be like a hen in the rain!"* and, with a shove and a pat on the back, had her in the cab, seated herself beside her, and bade the driver, who seemed to catch the spirit of it all, take them to the hospital.

* *Une pouille mouillée* is a common French metaphor for a faint-hearted person.

CHAPTER VII.

NEXT Miss Dennis sought another servant. In a house like ours, with several families under one roof, there is always a porter put in by the landlord, and, to a certain extent, his sentinel. The porter feels himself in some degree opposed to the lodgers, who, if they seek their comfort, soothe him by presents, and shut their eyes to his little levies of black-mail, one of which, his taking toll (in kind) of your firewood, is a custom which is sometimes stretched to downright plunder. If you run counter to this man he can annoy you in many little ways, from looking sulky when you hand him your key on leaving the house, and forgetting all messages and inquiries made for you, up to telling your landlord that you injure the fittings of your rooms, and the tradesmen who supply you that they will never get their money. Miss Dennis did not keep ours up late at night, and never failed to give civil words, but she had not made him so handsome a new year's gift as he thought his due; and from that hour he and his wife checked her

supply of servants. As she passed the box with windows in it where he sat cobbling, and his wife mending clothes, each with their feet on a pan of hot charcoal, not a servant coming to see Miss Dennis but would stop to learn what she could of that lady and her place. In nearly every case she was convinced in a few minutes that the place would never suit her, and went away without even seeing Miss Dennis. In her trouble Miss Dennis applied to Biddy, who brought her mother to stop the gap. Oh, what a bad-tongued old Irish hag it was! (That I should say so who am of the race!) But there are bad among them, and I would freely say that you had better even be French or English than like such as they. Oaths were common words with Biddy's mother, and I had been away from hearing them since I was a child, unless I came across some gentleman's servant, who could do no less than swear on so many full meals. Never had I heard such curses and frightful wishes, and she brought back the bad language to Biddy's tongue, which had fasted from it for years, except when she met her mother, and then she fell into it from the strength of old habit. I was scared at first when the old woman would come into our kitchen and revile Miss Dennis for setting her to cook this dish or that. By little and little, I found it was so much a habit with her that she would have gone on just the same if she had anything else to cook, or nothing at all.

It seemed as needful for her to curse and swear as for me to have my talk out, and Biddy told me it was just her mother's way, and meant nothing at all; and I will say she was a kind, hardworking woman, and very fond of Biddy's children and the two Dennises. Still I could not stand it, and I did not feel I ought to stand it, and Biddy, seeing that she risked losing her own place, withdrew her mother and brought forward an Irish girl with a very pretty face and figure and very little account to give of herself, having lived two months with this lady in Nantes, and three months with another, and years, she said, with another who had left the town and could not be traced. She was akin to Biddy and her mother, but there was some secret about that, and I had never heard from Biddy that she had any such relation until she came to try for the place.

Miss Dennis was much taken with her, and at once engaged her as housemaid and to mind the children, putting Françine back to cook's work. It was as hard to make out the name of the new comer as anything else about her. The French called her Hélène, Miss Dennis, Ellen, Biddy and her mother, Aileen, and she, who set herself up against being taken for Irish, had picked up a name at the theatre, and would fain be spoken to as "Mademoiselle Aline." Among us in the kitchen she was an outspoken girl, though what she spoke out was often anything but true, but when with

her betters she minced and clipped her words, and would bring in French when she had English enough to serve her turn. Miss Dennis thought it a good sign that she had such a dislike to be considered Irish. "It looked," she said, "as if the young person aimed at more civilised ways." I thought it highly uncivil to Biddy and myself, and though there was no call for her to like whisky, why should Aileen pretend that she could not bear potatoes?

"I'll be bound to say she has often had to eat them raw," said Biddy (this is the French way of putting that you have known the poorest poverty). "If she chooses to make herself out a half-bred, let her, Mary. Some of these mean Irish will try to pass themselves off as Scotch when the true tongue they had from their mother tells they're not English; but it was her bad chance to be born in this ill town, where, it's my belief, that the boys and girls are more degraded than the cats and dogs themselves" (this sally was provoked by the bad conduct of Biddy's boy, Michael, whose master had begun to complain of his idle and insolent ways).

I told Biddy that I thought it would be better if we two kept to ourselves as much as we could; but this is not so easy to do in a house with a different family in each story. You must, perforce, meet on the common stair; each landing seems made for the exchange of gossip with the servant of neighbours above you or

below should your own mistress be easy, or out of hearing. On each flat, or in each apartment, children are pushed into the ways of their elders and keep their late hours, partly from mere want of space to do otherwise, partly from it being an unheard-of thing for a French servant to be asked to cook a separate meal for children. I liked Françine when she was gay, but she had a hot temper by nature, and the kitchen-fire and all that had made it fiercer still. She was a lithe, quick, sallow girl, who was scraping up every *sou* to buy off her lover in case he drew a bad number and was bound to be a soldier. It is to be feared that she often "made the basket-handle jump," as French servants say, that is, made little profits, and played at give and take with the market-woman at the expense of her mistress. I had heard so much of this, and of one cook's basket handle being worth so much a year to her, and another's so much, that, though I knew little of the language, I would not trust the hold upon our basket-handle to Biddy, but sallied out myself and did my own chaffering, for it is little you can do there without haggling, and although I was forced to let them give me pretty much what change they liked, yet when I came to know their money better I found they had taken much less advantage of me than might have been expected.

To go back to Aileen, I cannot say but that she was a very handsome girl, with beautiful blue eyes, a great

mass of coarse black hair, a showy look, and ready ways that took Miss Dennis, who liked a servant who saw what she wanted, did things without being told, and had, as she said, "some style and manner in your room and at your door." It is true that Aileen, with all her readiness to see, seldom saw the dust on the furniture, but there are few of them in France who do. They hunt it round a room with a great feather-brush, flapping it about from place to place, just like children chasing a butterfly. The English ladies who visited my mistress would confide to her that they made a practice of doing all the dusting over again as soon as the dust had settled down in peace, but they were obliged to be very secret about it, lest they should fire the tempers of French servants, or wound their self-love. Thus Miss Dennis passed over such faults in Aileen as no more than were to be looked for from her Irish nature and French training.

Whether she had it from France or from Ireland, Aileen had the gift of getting on with you if she thought it worth her trouble. She did not often quarrel with Françine, though the cook had quite the usual French share of jealousy. She flattered me, making much of me, as some one above the others, and uttering such pleasantries about Ernest's visits as she thought I should look for, and hold to be my due. She petted the children, and never crossed them in words, though she, many a time, did not keep her word to them. She often sparred

with Biddy, but there was something that seemed to stay the words in their two mouths, so that they never came to a downright quarrel, and she could do more with the old mother than Biddy could herself. When work must be done, she could put on steam and bustle through it, if she found there was no chance of putting it on some one else; still she dearly loved her ease and pleasure, and made bitter complaints of losing all her Sunday's amusements, such as the theatre; for on Sunday there is always the longest and cheapest performance of the week, to suit the leisure of working-people, who will often begin to collect in the square at two o'clock in the afternoon, and wait for the play at half-past six; or the *café chantant*, where they go to hear singing, and where Aileen was always having some female friend make her *début*, or first appearance; or the balls given by the coopers, or the carpenters, or any other guild, even to the washerwomen; to which some one always brought her invitations. Within doors she found it so tiresome to be checked if she sang what little Harry called "Monday" songs, or to be stopped dancing with the children, or told not to make smart things for herself, or doll's clothes for Nora, or reproved if she cried out "*Dieu! Dieu!*" or "*Seigneur Jésus!*" as she did at the least trifle. Biddy, who had been sobered by trouble and poverty, had ceased to fret against English rules on such matters, and told Aileen, when she heard her cry

out, "*Le voilà donc arrivé mon jour de désolation. Dame, je commence de m'ennuyer déjà!*" that she, too, would perhaps be wiser some day. Biddy, however, owned that she had found it a great comfort since she had been with us, and had Sundays to herself, to have a quiet day to mend her clothes and the children's, and even earn a few *sous* by taking in stockings to darn for some cooks who never had time to put in a stitch, having, it might be, a matter of fifteen dishes to prepare for breakfast, and more for dinner. Aileen would purse up her pretty little mouth with great contempt, and then let it loose to utter hints that there was no telling whom she might marry yet. Of one thing she was quite certain, that she would never marry any man who would not break both her arms.*

Meantime she seemed in as much need of a place as Miss Dennis was of a servant, and kept herself right with her mistress; but no sooner had Miss Dennis left the house than that girl was to be seen by the porter's box, or at some window, or in any one's rooms but her own, standing with her arms "a-kimbo," as some people say in England; Biddy and the French called it "acting the pot with two handles." Every man in the house, and most of those who came into it, had something to

* This bit of the slang of French servant girls expresses that they aim at a husband who can keep them without their needing to work.

say to her if she were met on stair or landing. She knew all about all the young men of note in Nantes, and talked as if she knew many of them. She could not hope to marry one of them, but she aimed high for a girl who saved no money, looking for nothing less than to let furnished lodgings, or even to keep an inn, where she could sit in her little office, and make entries in books, and have her talk out with the gentry.

Such was Aileen, whom Mr. Lalor described as "a queer sort of a loose kind of a fish, but very virtuous, I dare say." Though she aimed at making me her ally, she could not quite resist putting on the airs of a beauty who looked above cooks, and just going so far as she dared to make Ernest take notice of her. She was of that vile sort that is proud if a man plays false to some one else for love of them. All is fish that comes to nets of their weaving; and, whatever airs she might give herself, she would have thought Ernest a very great fish indeed had he been taken in her meshes, and relished him all the more had he first broken loose from mine. Not that I took any trouble about him, I merely kept an eye on him and her. She did nothing I could lay hold of to write about, but just enough to nourish and increase Ernest's *amour-propre;* that self-love which a Frenchman will talk about as if it were something living which must be petted and hugged, a delicate baby which he is bound to nurse and dandle, and make sure

that no pins prick its dainty flesh, and that it never knows an instant's fretting for lack of food.

I cannot but say that Ernest stood the trial very well, allowing for his being a Frenchman, and taking it as a matter of course, and even of respect for himself and of duty to his neighbour, that he should have a compliment ready for anything that might seem to require one, and pretty speeches for us women. You see, if you will have men pleasant and civil, you must look for their being civil to others as well as to you; and so long as they are not too civil, you had far better not complain.

CHAPTER VIII.

LENT fell late that year, and the weather encouraged the ladies to prepare for making a great show of dress on Shrove Tuesday, before going into mourning on Ash Wednesday. In Lancashire we used to eat fried bacon on Collop Monday, and pancakes on the *Mardi Gras*, or Fat Tuesday, as it is called in France; and I have heard old people say that it was once a great day for cockfighting and other rough or savage sports. Here, in France, it is kept with feasting, and shows, and dances. The day is no more than begun before half the crowd in the streets wears mask-and-domino (a kind of habit that covers you from head to foot, and lends itself to disguise). When folks have breakfasted off all manner of good things, of which *crêpes*, or pancakes, make but a part, the ladies dress to appear at their windows, or on their balconies. They have been preparing their *toilettes* for some time before, and shop has been vying with shop in the grandiose language in which it proclaims the elegance of its fashions, or the

goodness of its *bonbons*. It was one man who, regretting that some parents forbade *bonbons* altogether, and others gave them "without discernment," announced that his were "as delightful to the infantine palate as they were wholesome, and even tonic, for the youthful stomach." It was a rival of his who had "reached so high a degree of perfection that his *bonbons* were as wholesome as home-made conserves. This he had no need to advertise; he did but speak out of regard for the interests of families." To the *Magasin des Modes miniatures* parents were invited to conduct their children to receive the rewards due to good conduct and application to their studies. There they were promised that, if big boys, they should find a tailor who would at once turn them into little *fashionables;* if girls, they would have their choice of toilettes as pretty as those of their mammas; and as for younger children, whether boys or girls, Madame Célestine "knew how to dress them like real cherubim."

Thither Miss Dennis and my mistress went to choose a *toilette* for Nora, that she might make a good figure among the French children, who were sure to be dressed like new dolls straight from Paris. They did not see Madame, who was "composing a costume," but they were shown what was termed "a crowd of her creations." A worthy old maid, who was Madame's partner, bestirred herself, and left her desk and book-

keeping, that she might be sure they saw these "delicious inventions" to the best advantage. She regretted the absence of Madame Célestine—"but you know, ladies," said she, "and it is even known to all the world, that when an idea which promises to be fertile in results unfolds itself in the mind of an artist he hastens to bring it to the light of day, and to set it in its loveliest aspect. Deign to visit us to-morrow, and you will see the results of Madame's studious morning."

My mistress called to mind that she had known Mademoiselle as the keeper of a very thriving shop for ready-made linen. The good woman's eyes brightened to find herself remembered; and she told how she had even retired to live on her *rentes*, but had been drawn back to labour by a desire to assist her niece, Madame Célestine.

"You know, Madame," said she, "that the artist, however fertile he, or, as in this case, she, may be in ideas, must, nevertheless, call on the capitalist for help to realise them. Madame, in this firm I am the capitalist. I have brought my savings, and my experience, to the assistance of my cherished niece, the only child of a sister lost too early; would that I could but see her installed in a better situation; all would then go well; but we have lately experienced a cruel disappointment: there was a shop which was just our affair, but the re-

calcitrant proprietor had exaggerated pretensions with regard to rent. We must learn to submit and to wait. We Bretons never despair. Will not Mademoiselle choose one of these spring-hats for the charming little lady? Linger round them for a few moments and you will believe that you smell the mignonette and violets of their trimmings!"

Miss Dennis, who always chose things for herself, and was disposed to cut these speeches short, selected a robe with a vest, after the fashion of Louis XV., which Mademoiselle declared to be "very gallantly decorated," though she somewhat sighed that Miss Dennis should not rather prefer a "robe of grey poplin, illustrated with knots of cherry-coloured taffetas," of which she said (with an enthusiasm that startled Miss Dennis), "that she could wish to have a child that she might see that child wear that dress!" She was a woman of precise manners, and wore a sombre dress, being a lay member of a religious society.

Poor little Harry felt keenly how little show he should make by the side of Nora, and wished many times that he were a girl, to have ribands and flowers in his hat. His first pair of braces, however, attached to a new suit, ordered for the day, more than made up for his sister's glories. Thenceforth, when Nora showed any vanity, Harry put her in mind that girls did not wear braces.

Early in the morning of Shrove Tuesday, Aileen—who came into our kitchen "as much dressed up," said Biddy, "as if she were a holy relic, or the Princess Ursula herself, as I've seen her in the procession, with two little angels holding up her train"—took me apart, and, under my promise to keep her secret, proposed that I should go with her and a friend of hers to the masked ball at the theatre that evening. "We need not go till our sober, early folks were in bed," she stated; "she could arrange with the porter to let us in; Biddy never slept in the house, so would be none the wiser; and as for Françine, Françine had her own ways of carrying on, and was wiser than to tell tales. She would find me a domino. I must not, of course, tell Ernest."

My mistress would have let me go to any proper place to have a dance, so I had no need to slink out at nights. I knew nothing about masked balls, but it seemed to me if even Ernest was not to be told, or taken with us, there could be no great good about them, and I said as much to Aileen, and gave her more good advice than she liked, though she laughed it off. She left me, professing she might change her mind about going; indeed, though it would be highly amusing, she did not care for it herself, but she did not wish to disappoint her friend. I saw her no more that day, but Biddy, who was sent out on some errand,

and had put down her basket to say a prayer in a church, said there she saw Aileen, who ran out in such a hurry, on hearing the hunting-horns blowing in the street, that she forgot to take holy water, "which was a bad sign for this world's luck, and the next world's blessing."

By mid-day every window and balcony was crowded, and there were at least a hundred and fifty carriages in the streets. These were filled with the young men of the city in masks-and-dominos, or dresses such as are worn at a fancy ball. The police took charge of the carriages, and kept them to rules as to their pace, the distance between them, and which way they were to go. They also, perhaps, kept an eye on the young men, lest the licence of the day should lead them too far beyond what is allowed by custom. For days before Shrove-Tuesday the young men buy up all the oranges in the town, that, as they pass slowly beneath the balconies, they may salute the ladies with a tribute of fruit. These oranges are like the apple which was to be given to the fairest; you may judge how pretty or popular you are by the number you receive. My mistress, who was still so handsome that the good Catholics would lament to her that she was not one of them, that she might be set to make a *quête* (that is to hold the plate for money at the church-door, an office for which the best-looking ladies are always sought), had fifty oranges thrown at her feet.

Little Harry Dennis was overcome, and said he had "never seen such a 'normous lot—not in all his world!" My mistress was kind enough to make all Biddy's children ill with them, which was a great thing for them—who had never known what it was to have more than a single orange among three or four—and one that will always be something for them to look back upon. As for Harry and Nora, though they ate under rule, they managed, when oranges were flying, to secure as many as obliged their aunt to dose them well shortly after. The day ended with the drums beating the *rappel*, and a grand procession of men carrying Chinese lamps. Then began the balls, public and private; some left them early, but many danced so late as to be far too tired and sleepy to go to work or church next day. Many shops were closed and chairs in church unfilled on Ash Wednesday.

When I met Aileen in the morning it was very plainly to be seen that she had never been in bed the night before. Her face looked yellow, her eyes red, and her hair was carelessly put up in yesterday's plaits. She had a great gift of making herself look tawdry at a trifling cost; but that morning she seemed to be hardly awake enough to know how she was dressed. I had often thought my own thoughts about those lovely pink cheeks of hers which did so flush when she went out of doors, but were so pale in the dullness of Miss Dennis's

apartment. I thought them over again while saying to her,

"So you went to the ball?"

She shook her head, as if to say "no."

"At any rate, you did not have any 'beauty-sleep' last night."

"So Miss Dennis says," answered the girl with great demureness. "She tells me I look as if I had been sitting up all night." Then she yawned without stint or reserve, and, leaning back against the wall, stuck her arms to her side and went on—

"I fancy it's the thought of Lent coming on. It weighs on some folks, you know. Oh dear! I wish I could go to sleep till Easter Sunday! Did you hear a noise on the stairs early this morning? Miss Dennis did, and wonders what it could have been. So do I, so does Françine."

Soon after I was asked by my mistress who could have been running up and downstairs just before five o'clock that morning. The noise had woke her and my master, and she had not been able to sleep since. I said I had heard of it from Aileen, who wondered what it was.

"Oh, Aileen!" said Mr. Richards, "I dare say."

I knew my master had his guess about it by his dry way of speaking; but no more was said unless by Biddy, who catching some hint, cross-questioned Harry,

in whose room Aileen slept, as to her movements. Harry said he had been "too wide-asleep" to hear any noises. Biddy put it down to Françine, who went about her work in what Harry called "ragamuffin old slippers," shuffling down to let in Aileen with the connivance of the porter, who had lent them the street-door key.

Mr. Lalor, who had gone to look at the masked ball from a box in the theatre, on his way back to his lodgings, shortly after midnight, was challenged by the man on guard at the barrier. In his mooning way he was unready with the countersign to the *qui vive* that hailed him. In an instant a bayonet was levelled at his breast, and, though he found his tongue, he, at almost the same time, found himself in the guardhouse. He was quickly known to be "that tall droll of an Englishman who lodged hard by, and had so superb a horse." He was set free with a short rough apology, and a somewhat longer rebuke for being so backward with the countersign, a delay of the kind having been known to cost men their lives.

Though Aileen was not found out, yet it might truly be said that she lost her place through that ball, for, seeing herself very haggard, she used her paint-brush with less caution than usual, and let it slip over the lines of her well-shaped lips, and smear her dimpled chin. That smear gave Miss Dennis quite a rush of

new thoughts about her servant. She went to work with such a will that before a week was over if she still knew nothing of the ball, she had learnt other things that made her uneasy till she got rid of the girl. She might have heard it all before, but then she was eager to catch at any servant, and now she had one ready to her hand in the person of a steady Scotch girl who was leaving a French family. Her account was that her mistress wished her to work on the Sabbath as the French did, and put her scruples down to laziness, and "yoked on her till her speerit was broken." Madame (who, by-the-by, was a French Protestant, and one of the pastor's needle-club) shrugged the shoulders of her mind, and told Miss Dennis that the girl was a *dévote*. *Dévotes* of the Church of Rome or of Calvin came to just the same thing. They made useless servants. One kind was always wanting to go to mass, the other to the sermon. That was all. Their religion should be to do their work and keep things clean. Mademoiselle might try this Hannah if she chose, she would not go to balls or theatres.

Miss Dennis was just then inclined to think that the absence of one set of faults must imply the freedom from all others, so she hired Hannah, after giving Aileen the usual eight days' notice. The girl knew enough bad of herself to be very suspicious, and I afterwards had reason to think that she put down the

loss of her place to Biddy and me. However, she put a good face on it, merely remarking that she should have nothing more to say to old maids of any degree, by which I really do think she meant to give my self-love a little wound, seeing that I had made it no secret that I was over five-and-twenty. She never again came into my kitchen, but Miss Dennis complained that Françine and she had become great friends since they were parted, as is often the case with servants who fretted their mistress by quarrelling when together.

One evening Françine was so long in bringing Nora back from school that Miss Dennis took Hannah with her to seek them. They were found with Aileen in the Passage Pommeraye, an arcade of shops. Françine said the child had teased her into going there that she might see the pretty things in the windows by gaslight; but Nora owned to her aunt that they had been all over the town with "Mademoiselle Aline," and had gone into the passage to look at the clock, on waking to a sudden fear that they were much behind their time.

CHAPTER IX.

THIS was the first time I had kept my Lent in a country where my own church was the uppermost. I did not find much difference unless it were in degree. We had easy ways in England in my young days, and in France I found easy ways also. There were strict rules for the strict, and lax precepts for the lax.

What struck me most was the manner in which the susceptible French got the length of Lent on their minds. I do not mean that the very good were less cheerful, or showed any outward difference, except in wearing black. The very good, however, are very uncommon. We are, most of us, only so-so, and they were the so-so people, whose consciences obliged them to observe Lent against their liking, by the whole, or the half, or the quarter, who were so snappish and fretful indoors, and gave you short answers in shops. Some fretted themselves into fancied illness before a month was out; others, who did not fast at all, were gloomy for company's sake; and really were like our north-

country children who call for Easter to come in rhyme:

"Long Saturday never be done!
Heigh for Sunday afternoon!
Heigh for Sunday at twelve o'clock!"

As for me, I was brought up under a fine old gentleman of a priest who had got his learning at St. Omer, and he made great allowances for those who had to earn their bread, and eat it, in Protestant service. So, if my suet-puddings did not lie heavy on my stomach, they had no need to do so on my conscience; but now, I am told, things are much changed in England. A set of meddlesome converts have come in there who heat Holy Church till they make her almost too hot for those who sat in her when they were preaching Protestant sermons. I found my confessor, whom I chose because I often saw him with Mr. Lawson, very much like my good old guide in England.

"*Ma pauvre fille*," said he, "eat what comes before thee; but take care you do not marry. When you are old enough, you must come and be my housekeeper."

This was a great compliment to my sober dress and quiet looks. I took it as such, for I knew a young woman who tried for his place, but failed because she wore flounces, which, he said, would not do at all for a priest's servant.

The dislike to fish, so common among those who eat it on fast-days, was as fanciful as the common complaints of illness and low spirits. The fish was so good, and they had so many nice ways of cooking it, that it seemed to me much like "starving on good roast beef." Indeed, if one might have changed the rules of the Church, the old lean beef, and the small tough mutton (for the butchers killed all their poorest and most worn-out cattle and sheep during Lent), seemed fitter to fast on than the good salmon and the fine shad stewed in white wine with a dainty stuffing, or the lobster *vol-au-vent*, an effort of Ernest's skill, which he brought us as a present for Good Friday. I sometimes passed by the Château, and walked on the river's bank of an evening to watch the fishing with bait and net. In our wanderings we had once lodged for some time in a farm-house hard by a great fishery on the Severn. It surprised me to see nearly every kind of fish I had seen caught in the Severn caught in the Loire also, at the same time of year, with the same bait, and the same kind of nets. Even the call of the fishermen for a comrade behind time (by rapping the side of the boat in a particular manner) was the same which had so often woke me in early morning. The quantities taken were amazing. The Severn salmon were more abundant than those of the Loire, but the shad of the Loire were larger than those of the Severn. How well Biddy dressed them,

and how she scoffed at my knowing no better than just to boil them in plain water! Lampreys and lamperns, eels and elvers, there they were all in the river just as we had left the like of them in England; but in the stew-pan and on the dish they were so "masked" with sauce and seasonings we should not have known them again.

Fish leads me to the first of April; for what we call making an "April-fool" the French call making an "April-fish." The day is made of much more account in France than in England. I had been told that at Tours, in honour of April-Fools' Day, each fishmonger ran a cord across the street on which he slung a large and gaily painted fish of wood or metal. This was not done in Nantes, for there were no fishmongers' shops; all fish being sold in the market. Still, as in England, people are sent for things which do not exist, or taken in by some absurd story; but the commonest trick is to pin a paper fish to some one's clothes, and let the person walk the streets wearing it amid the subdued merriment of passers-by. My master met Mr. Lalor and Mr. Lawson walking arm-in-arm in utter ignorance that one had a fine shad, and the other a salmon, cut out of paper and well-coloured, pinned to the back of his coat.

"Behold two gentlemen who have swallowed their fish!" said one man in the street. "And who look as if they were taking exercise to digest them," added

another, making a jest of their walking with a will and purpose like Englishmen, and not in a mincing way like foreigners, who seldom set foot off the paving-stones. My master advised the speakers to look behind. This was like the street-boy's request to the cabmen "to whip behind," for when the two Frenchmen turned to look at each others' coat-tails, they found themselves April-Fools, there being no fishes pinned to them as they had supposed.

Both Mr. Lawson and Mr. Lalor were good-natured, and found their fish easy of digestion. On thinking over who could have had the chance of meddling with their coats, each put the trick down to Nora Dennis, but Mr. Lawson was sure some one must have helped her, for the shad and the salmon were better cut out and coloured than her tender though mischievous age would permit. No one, however, could suspect Miss Dennis of abetting a practical joke—she, who held all joking to be unladylike.

That morning a letter came to Biddy which she brought that I might read it to her. She could scarcely read English print, much less English writing, but she had been driven to learning how to read and write in French, and was so quick at that I wondered she had never made another effort and mastered her English. It purported to have been written by her husband. It told her that he was at the Salt Lake, and quite a great man among the

Mormons, but would hold a still higher place the more wives he could reckon. He did not say that he had not as many as would keep him respectable, but there was still room for her, and if she would come out to him with the children he would promise to give her light work to do, such as was suited to her strength.

It frightened me to look at Biddy as I read. She was in a white heat, and speechless from rage. I saw her catch up her clean cap, and try to tie the strings, but her fingers failed her. I put my hands on her shoulders and pushed her down on a seat; then I read the letter over again. This second time I saw something on the turn of the leaf, and read these words "Is not this a nice little fish to swallow?"

It was a cruel jest, and it came from Aileen; so Biddy said, so soon as she could speak. I tried to quiet her, but the only sign I could see of her growing calm was that she turned red from being white. She also grew pious in words, which with her was always a sign of anger.

"Wid the help of the Holy Virgin I'll blacken those blue eyes of hers; I'll wash her head for her."* Her cap-strings were soon tied now, and she started from her seat with the declared purpose of walking to the other end of Nantes to give Aileen a beating.

* "*Laver la tête à quelqu'un*," to wash any one's head for him, is to give him as good a scolding as lies in your power.

Now to that I had no objection, but I thought the poor cripple so sure to get the worst of it that I said all I could to stop her. Biddy, however, assured me that what was wanting in the strength and straightness of her poor back was made up by the vigour of her spirit, and the support of her good conscience, and the sense of her wrongs, and a reliance on the saints above, who would deserve to be beaten themselves if they looked on and let her be ill-used by that hussy, who never went to vespers, nor to mass, high or low, unless it were to show the fine clothes she got in an evil way, and ought to blush, so that you could see it through all her paint, to be seen in by decent women. My master and mistress were out, so I could not stop Biddy's going unless I locked her in, which I had some thoughts of doing, but I trusted that the long walk would calm her by wearying her poor bones; and so it did, for she came back quite worn out, but having used no weapon but her tongue.

No sooner was Biddy gone, than I had my turn. A little boy rung at our bell, and put into my hands two tin dishes, with covers, such as cooks in France use when they send your dinner from their shops. I took them, thinking this to be one of Ernest's polite attentions. I could not make out what were the contents of one of the dishes, but thought, from their white and slippery look, that they might be snails, so I put that

aside for my master, who liked such messes. As for the other, I wondered what should set Ernest about sending me a dish of carrots (which he had heard me say I disliked), unless it were to prove that he could make me like them when dressed with sugar in the French fashion. I tasted the dish, but thought his cooking was not so good as usual. There was a slip of paper beneath each cover, and I could make out "Mariette" on both; but what the other French meant, I did not know, till Biddy came home, and told me that the "same hussy had served me the same trick," for on one paper was to be read "*Jolis petits pieds d'anguille, arrangés avec une sauce au lait de pigeon, à la jolie Mariette,*" which may be put into English, "Eel's feet, done up with a sauce of pigeon's milk." Eel's feet and pigeon's milk I had been sent to buy when a child in England, so I knew this piece of impertinence to mean that I was to be made an April fool; but Biddy had to explain what was intended by "the carrots with sugar, plucked up for the genteel and amiable Mariette." She told me that to "pull up a carrot" for any one was to play off some trick on him. It was said when young fellows left their wine-shop, or the cook's where they had dined, without paying their reckoning.

Biddy, who could by no means digest the fish she had been made to swallow, now disclosed that it was Aileen, who, taking a mischievous pleasure in thwarting

Miss Dennis, had been with Nora and cut out the fish worn by Mr. Lawson and Mr. Lalor. The girl had both a love of fun and was very spiteful besides. I never went now to see Miss Dennis's Sarah but I found Aileen there; she made her way to her on the strength of each of them having lived with Miss Dennis. I thought that her playing me such a trick gave me a very good opening for dropping Aileen's acquaintance. She tossed it all off in a saucy way, saying that she should be wiser another year. Such pleasantries should only be practised on good-natured people, who had sense enough to take a joke.

We did not entirely cease to speak, but we might have done so for anything we had to say to each other. Though Biddy had at first been so furious that she only seemed to keep up her acquaintance with Aileen that she might not lose the pleasure of abusing her whenever they met, they soon were upon their old terms, and Biddy, at times, would appear almost inclined to fall out with me for not letting bygones be bygones. Aileen, every now and then, gave her old clothes for the children, or little perquisites and pickings on which Biddy would turn a few *sous* in the Place de Bretagne, "which was for all the world," she said, "so like what was round Pathrick's that it made an Irish heart warm for joy."

I had never seen the neighbourhood of St. Patrick's,

Dublin, nor did I much desire to do so, if it was like what I saw in the Place de Bretagne, where there was a kind of rag-fair—all but the rags, for the French have not the Irish bent for wearing other peoples' old clothes and shoes. On market-days you might see the cobblers mending shoes in the open air, as Biddy said was done at Irish fairs. It is to the Place de Bretagne that poor people go to buy the *vaisselle*, that is to say, the second-hand tin, iron and earthenware that used to be given at weddings of the working classes. That custom is falling into disuse, but the supply of half-worn pots and kettles does not seem to lessen. On this market Biddy plied a branch of retail-commerce of which I had never before heard. She begged from English servants all the used-up tea-leaves of their households. Then she dried them, curled them neatly, and sold them in the Place de Bretagne, telling me that they were still quite strong enough to make what the French consider a powerful medicine. Sarah and Aileen had scorned to take so much trouble, and given Biddy their tea-leaves without demur, as I did too, but Scotch Hannah, finding something might be made by them, said "Na, na, in this weary world it behoved her to sell the washings of her own teapot."

Though Mr. Lalor's fish had laid light on his stomach, something Mr. Lawson said about the custom of the day troubled his mind, and he applied to my master to

learn if the parson were held to be sound in his views by English churchmen? "I can't make him out, Richards. He's hand-in-glove with all the *curés* who like old stones. The only one I have seen who would have nothing to say to him was a kind of monk who was on a preaching mission not far from the Count's. We went to hear him; for my own part, it was more to see him, for I could make out little of what he said. He had two very highly-coloured pictures of heaven and hell, stuck up on either hand, and when he wanted to clinch what he was saying, he touched one or the other with a stick. He showed Lawson his proper place in the bad picture, and said he was sure to end there if he did not submit to the Holy Father. Lawson kept his temper, and bowed himself off in a sort of Oxford high-polite manner, thanking the preacher for having brought before him so clearly the friar's sermon of the middle ages. The monk had not the least notion of his meaning, nor I either, but it comes to this, if Lawson is right, all I have ever been taught must be wrong, which is not a pleasant thought when a man's turned forty."

"What's it all about?"

"Why, about All Fools' Day, which you know yourself is a great festival of your church as well as of mine. Lawson makes out that the heathens and Turks on the slopes of the Himalaya Mountains have a Lent of their own, and towards the end of it an All Fools'

Day. · Now he'll be telling me next, that my days of obligation come from these Himalayas, and I don't know what else, and my faith will be rooted up." It was not very difficult to settle the scruples of Mr. Lalor. They were appeased when it was pointed out to him that All Fools' Day, though on the almanac of both countries, did not appear on the calendar of either church.

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER new thing to me was the play of the Passion of our Lord, and the Descent from the Cross, acted in a travelling theatre to promote devotion during Lent. My English notions made me almost think it wrong to represent such persons and such scenes on a stage. However, Mr. Lawson, who was there himself, told me that such plays had once been set forth all through England. On his journey in Brittany, he told me that he had seen "great Calvaries," as they called them; one, at least, with more than two hundred stone figures set upon a stage of stone, showing forth the events of our Lord's life on earth. They gave him the notion of having been the petrifaction of such a representation as this, enlarged in the number of characters, but rather less than more solemn. Indeed, it was all very seriously done, and, for a light afterpiece, we had the strange adventures of the Holy Géneviève, patron-saint of Paris.

The churches of Nantes are much changed for the

better since the time of which I write. I saw them bad enough, but they had been far worse. Mr. Lawson, who always knew more about the towns he visited than all but one in a thousand of those who lived in them told me that the cathedral, after being for 1500 years a place of prayer, got at the Revolution worse treatment than when the wild Normans sacked what there was of a town in the year 843. *They* did but leave it to decay, but in the days of Carrier it was only suffered to stand because its size made it be found useful for holding warlike stores, and, on Sundays, for public balls and fêtes. No wonder that there are out-of-the-way places in Brittany where the peasants "make the cross of horror" when they hear the word "Republic." It was not until Quinquagesima Sunday, 1803, that a funeral with religious rites was allowed to be openly solemnised, and young children whose few years had been lived under the Republic, and who had never seen any kind of worship, followed the priests, taking them for some of the maskers who, as I have said, parade the streets in time of carnival.

Most of the old churches were turned into warehouses, of one kind or other, when I first saw Nantes, that is, what was left of them, for there were few that had not been mutilated in one part or other. One, I remember, after being a locksmith's shop, was made a place of storage for hay and straw. The pillars were up to the

ears in fodder, and the fretted hanging-roof had been chipped by lazy lads lying at their length on straw. In my own time, most of this has been made decent. The great church of St. Nicholas owes its rebuilding to one priest's efforts; and though Mr. Lawson and his friends may say, and do say, that the architecture is truly painful, what it wants in being what they call the right thing may be made up in good-will. I will also say you are forbidden, by a printed notice, to spit on the floor of the cathedral, which, though it may interfere with liberty and equality, is, to my English mind, very comforting, and not very often to be seen in France.

At the Cathedral, that year, they had turned the space between two bays, at the west end, into an Easter-sepulchre, or *reposoir*. You saw the outside watched by men dressed like Roman soldiers. The entrance was half concealed by great pots of Eastern plants and low side-scenes representing scattered stones, or loose blocks about the mouth of a cave in the rocks. Those who knew better than I did, said it was well got up; but were more struck with what they saw in another church which was scantily lighted, so that you could but just see a tall Latin cross rising from the rood-loft towards the lofty spring of the arches that bore the roof. On its upper limb was a crown of thorns, and a scroll in the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew tongues. On its arms, a spear and other instruments of the Passion, with the garment

of the Lord. In the subdued light, putting one in mind of the great darkness, it had a very solemn look; and, though I may have gone to half a dozen more churches, each vying with the other, I have not the least recollection of the *reposoirs* I saw after that.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE is a custom in France which I never heard of in England,* that is, of the young gentlemen of a town agreeing to devise what they call "a Cavalcade." They fix on a book, such, it may be, as 'Don Quixote,' spare no pains or money to dress like the characters contained in it, then ride in mounted procession through the chief streets of the city. I saw the cavalcade from 'Don Quixote' some years later; but this, my first Easter in Nantes, there was a far grander cavalcade than that, showing forth the history of Brittany from very early times. I can never forget it; for not only was it a striking sight, but every one who came to our apartment talked of nothing else. The older men and the women, who had nothing to do with it but through their connections, took it up with as much spirit as the young men who were to ride. The learned men were in request

* Unless it be at Coventry, but there the Godiva cavalcade is not got up by the young men, but managed altogether by the Town Council.

on all sides to arrange the order and number of the characters, and to say what should be worn by each. None were busier than Mr. Lawson and some of his friends. What accounts he used to bring of the little contests and contradictory opinions that arose over even such a pastime as this! There were antiquaries so staunchly Breton that they were for having the procession headed by Namnes, grandson of Noah, who was said, in some old chronicles, to have founded and given his name to their city just 300 years after the Deluge. There were others who would not have suffered Bluebeard to appear in it, though he had been a real man in those parts, and much more wicked than the story makes him out, which I was quite pleased to learn. Then, when the plan was at last fixed, there were such polite struggles among the young men to secure the characters for whom they had a fancy, or whose dresses they thought would best become them, that Mr. Lalor said it was even worse than getting up a play in a private house. Many of the fashionable young men had handsome horses, and the horse was often the cause of his master's riding as some great man instead of being offered the post of one of the great man's followers. This was the case with Mr. Lalor, whose horse was much admired. That *it* might appear in the show, *he* was urged to take a part, and even allowed some choice, though strongly pressed to fix on that of Bluebeard.

Mr. Lalor was, at first, inclined to resent this as an affront both to his beard and his character. "Did they want him to dye his beard?" It might be he was not quite wrong in suspecting a little pleasantry, for the long beard he had grown that winter could not be called anything but red. "The beard," it was said, "might be treated as of no consequence;" and on being told by Mr. Lawson that the real Bluebeard, before he became a ruined spendthrift, trying to regain his wealth by fiendish arts which drew him into fiendish crimes, had been a brave soldier who fought under Joan of Arc against the English, was appeased; though he still thought it absurd to ask a man with a reddish beard to represent a man with a blue one, an Irishman to represent a Breton, and a bachelor, one who had made away with so many wives. As for that beard, if he had chosen to play the part at all, he would have managed it somehow. He did not understand assuming a character and not carrying it out." Mr. Lawson assured him that an Irishman, nay, an Englishman also, was a very suitable representative of any Breton; for, not to speak of the constant coming and going from one side of the Channel to the other that went on in the Middle Ages, there was reason to think that the first Bretons were fugitives from the insular Britain to that which was not an island; poor exiles, who, fleeing from Romans or Saxons, and looking back with love to the land they had

left, called their new country "Brittany," and its southern peninsula "Cornwall."

"You know better than I about that," replied Mr. Lalor. "What does surprise me is that you, Lawson, should not only admit that there was a real Bluebeard, but allow him to have been a Frenchman, and not a fellow with a crooked sword and a turban, as I have always been led to suppose. Now I did think that you would have told us that if there ever was a Bluebeard at all, he lived somewhere near the Himalaya mountains."

"That I think very likely," said Mr. Lawson, "but I have not traced the legend. There are, however, at least two Breton Bluebeards, De Retz, and an early duke, who is said to have murdered seven wives."

"Whatever ye do," cried Mr. Lalor, "don't ye let them leave out St. Patrick's sister, who was such a credit to their country."

"We think it would hardly be respectful to her or her family," said Mr. Lawson, "to bring her in, as she must be represented by one of the female circus-riders, who are to play the duchesses. She, you know, who was the mother of four-and-twenty sons, who all became missionaries!"

Mr. Lalor allowed the truth of this, and added it would even be worse than that he should have been asked to ride as the Marshal de Retz. The offence

given by such a request could only be covered by the high birth and rank of the criminal, his previous good character, and the great enormity of his crimes. "If the sins had been smaller," said my master, "the offence had been larger! All I complain of, Mr. Lawson, is that Constance, whom we have cried with so many times in Shakespeare, should be, after all, only a duchess who fretted the soul of her Bretons by marrying below her station twice out of her three weddings."

"It can't be helped now," said Mr. Lawson. "I have been the means of putting on some noble ladies to make up for her. You see I care for this duchy. I shall come again. I have lived long in a part of England, the shire of Richmond, which the Conqueror gave to his cousin of Brittany. He and his followers left us Northerners the Breton name of Alain, which we spell Alan, and there is scarce a family bearing arms in that district which has not a few of the ermines of Brittany in some part of its coat-armour, showing of whom it once held its lands. I care for them all, I feel a kinship between their history and ours, and I think I may say I have been of some use in making the list of *dramatis personæ* less partial, for while all were eager to have any one who had ever gained, or been supposed to have gained any advantage over the English, there was a party who wanted to keep out those who had been allied with us, such as Count John of Montfort. But I

fought for him and for his heroine of a wife. What would the cavalcade have been without the three brave Joans. First, Joan of Flanders, who, when her husband Montfort was made prisoner, gave his lords fresh heart, saying, 'My lords, be not astonied because of my lord whom we have lost; he was but one man. Behold my little son, who, if it please God, shall bring him back again.' Then there was Joan of Penthievre, Montfort's lame niece, against whom he contended for the duchy with the weapons both of law and of battle. This Joan, when her husband dared to show the treaty by which he had given up her rights, told him, 'I married you that you might defend my heritage, and not give up one-half of it. I am but a woman, but I would lose my life, and two lives if I had them, rather than consent to such a surrender." Wherewith she made him set at nought that treaty he had signed without taking her into account, though he had taken three oaths to uphold it, swearing once on the altar, once on the Gospels, and once on the Holy Eucharist. The third was Joan of Clisson, the mother of the famous Constable, that 'rough and valiant lady' who followed Joan of Montfort. Henry IV., entering Nantes, swore his oath that the Dukes of Brittany had been no *petits compagnons* *

* In the Middle Ages they called any poor young gentleman a *petit compagnon*, who went a fighting without vassals or retainers behind him.

in their day. I think we may affirm that these valiant ladies could hold their own among knights and nobles."

"It sounds very well when you tell it," said Mr. Lalor, with a doubtful look, "or to read in print, but how would it be in private life?"

After much talking, it ended in Mr. Lalor's agreeing to ride as Duke Alain Barbe-Torte, or Wry Beard, and setting seriously to work to make his beard bear out the nickname. This might have been hard to accomplish, but, chancing to hear it doubted by some one, if the by-name of "Barbe-Torte" did really mean that Duke Alan's beard grew all to one side, or whether it were not rather twisted and twined in grand rolls, like the golden *torques*, sometimes found by peasants when ploughing old battle-fields, Mr. Lalor settled that he would give his beard the benefit of this more liberal and generous interpretation, and began to divide it into two parts, and train it to heroic curves.

It was droll to hear my master tell what passed with the barbers. Before Mr. Lalor's beard got the proper twist he must have tried all the artists of Nantes, from the great men who kept billiard-rooms as well as rooms for cutting hair, down to the little shaving-shops near the quay, frequented by a low class of customers, kept by thorough Bretons, who would play you an air on the fiddle as well as shave you. As he consulted my master, who, like a Frenchman, was always shaved by a barber,

Mr. Richards said he would take him first to a new man, a clever young fellow, a sort of musical genius, who would, no doubt, enter with warmth into helping any one to make a proper appearance in the cavalcade. Mr. Lalor thanked him, but begged as a further kindness, that Mr. Richards would himself be shaved, and allow him to look on, that he might judge whether he could trust his beard to this young man's hands. My master agreed, and they went together.

"Though we laughed at Lalor, he turned out to have been wise," said Mr. Richards. "I can tell you, Anne, I was glad to get out of that fellow's reach; I think he'd been up all night, singing or something. At any rate, he went on like an 'enraged musician.' To begin, he lathered me so fiercely that he filled my mouth with soap. On my telling him of it, he pitched the brush across the room and took to the razor; one razor would not cut, and then another, and both were sent after the soap-brush. I began to think him crazy, and Lalor jumped up and down, and made me signs that I had better leave the shop. Presently I saw blood and felt a gash, and off flew another razor with another oath after it (I forgot to say that curses had been flying too). Now a Frenchman, when he cuts you in shaving, generally makes out that it was a pimple monsieur had on his chin, and you tell him you are certain you had nothing of the sort, but this fellow did nothing but confound

himself and his razors, and he was so wild altogether, and my throat so much in his power that, instead of making a row, I mildly made some remarks about the stubbornness of my beard. *That* he would not admit, but blamed himself and the Fates."

"Monsieur is too good to say so; it is my own fault. For my misfortune I am born thus. I can do nothing of a morning, more particularly of this morning; I am unstrung, out of harmony with my art. I feel myself bewildered, confused, obfuscated of mornings. Ah! why will not man be shaved of an evening?"

This outburst seemed to do him good, for he at last found a razor to his mind, and completed his task. "Upon my word," said Mr. Lalor, "I could not have sat so steadily as you did, Richards, with that play-acting fellow flourishing his razors about you in that mad way."

Next Mr. Lalor went to look at the style of handling of two barbers, who shared the shaving of Mr. Lawson's chin. Mr. Lawson, wherever he went, found friends with merits which no one seemed to have known until he came. One of these barbers was a fiddler besides, and in great request at working-men's weddings. He both fiddled and shaved with his left hand, and boasted that he could dare to bet that out of a thousand chins he would not cut three; having, as he said, "that left hand very sure. In fact, he was famous for his skill and

steadiness of hand, not in Nantes only, but for miles and miles round his own district. There were many who, from their hands shaking, were always wounding people. They were not worthy of the art; he never wounded any one. He had come into Nantes finding his time too much taken up, in the country, with handling his other instrument, the fiddle (which was of his own making, by-the-by), at weddings. They sought him for leagues round his village, and paid but ill." He used to tell Mr. Lawson the old Breton songs, and all the customs of the peasants; but Mr. Lalor said no left-handed man should ever touch his beard.

Mr. Lawson's other barber was a quiet old man with a love for natural history; proud to have some notice taken of his cases of moths, beetles, butterflies and crickets. "In fact," said Mr. Lawson, "I find them all good to talk to. They make the tour of France to learn their trade, and staying a month here and a month there, they pick up things to tell you."

"They all take the measure of your good nature in a minute, Lawson," said Mr. Lalor. "They won't tell you their charge, but say they never fix a price to a gentleman, but leave it to him to pay what he is used to pay, or even not to pay at all. You always give them four times as much as any Frenchman would. Will you believe me, Richards, at one little town in Brittany, the shop was full, and all hands busy, and they set a boy of

seven or eight years old to shave Lawson, and he allowed the lad to do it." "It was on a Sunday, when all the peasants and workmen go to be shaved; just as in my native parish they used all to flock, of a Sunday morning, to a woman who shaved and 'blooded' them. The boy was a fine little fellow, and did not 'wound' me, any more than my left-handed friend. It is true he worked some soap into my mouth, and then asked, in an innocent way, 'Does it hurt you, monsieur?' as if he knew what it was to have it in his eyes." "Oh, but that's the common speech," said Mr. Richards. "It does provoke me, when I complain of the soap in my mouth, to be asked, in return, '*Fait-il du mal, monsieur?*'"

As neither of these could satisfy Mr. Lalor, my master next took him to his own old barber, saying he would make him attend to Mr. Lalor, though he himself had not seen him for weeks, the man being a great deal in his billiard-room. Mr. Richards left word with the master's wife that he wished to speak to him, and then went into the inner room and allowed the *garçon* to shave him as usual. Just then a gentleman came up to madame's desk and asked her to send for her husband to shave him.

"There it goes," said the *garçon*, with a scornful shrug of the shoulders; "such are the subscribers! Does monsieur know what subscribers are? They are the most captious, the hardest to please, of all people in the

world. For nine years has that gentleman withheld from me the honour of touching his beard. For nine years and more, sir, has he been a subscriber, and I have never touched his beard!"

As he said this, his voice rose with wrath and anguish, and the workings of his features expressed scorn that he should be so scorned, and a deep craving, a baffled desire to shave that beard. My master tried to comfort him by saying that sooner or later it must come under his hand, and that then, no doubt, its owner would confess how unjustly he had slighted his merit. The *garçon* smiled sadly, but shook his head, observing, "All subscribers are difficult, but this one is of the last and worst degree of difficulty. He was almost persuaded that that gentleman was born to be his torment. He was harassed and haunted by the thought of him."

My master, turning to Mr. Lalor, explained all this to him, and pointed out a framed paper on which was written the names of all the subscribers in numbered order, with the days on which each came to be shaved. Below it was a piece of furniture full of pigeon-holes in which lay each man's towel rolled up, and put into such a ring as is sometimes used for dinner-napkins, marked with his own number. The whole was headed, "*Contrôle Nominatif de MM. les Hommes.*" When the chief man did come, he suited Mr. Lalor's fancy, and was allowed to carry out those clippings and curlings by which

Mr. Lalor's beard was brought into unison with the nick-name given in history to Duke Alan. It may be feared the *garçon* looked with a grudging eye on yet another beard which he was barred from touching.

CHAPTER XII.

At last all were ready. Mr. Lawson found among his stores a fine old sword and some other pieces of armour which he lent to Narcissus *Barbe-Torte*, and carefully informed him and all of us of everything that had ever been done by or said about the Duke he was to represent by way of preparation. A very pretty sight was that Cavalcade. We had a fine day for it; every one kept holiday. The country-people thronged into the town; a show in themselves, so gay and various were their costumes. Above the closed shops, every balcony was thronged, every window crowded, in the streets through which the procession was to move.

First passed the age of the Druids, shown forth on a car drawn by oxen with white trappings and gilded horns, which were led by what I should have called wild men of the woods, but the printed paper called them ancient Britons. High on this car rose a huge boulder, resting on four upright blocks of stone. Around it stood white-robed priests and priestesses holding the

gilded sickles with which they severed the sacred mistletoe from the oak, and bards with harps shining in the sun. After this came another car, with a Roman general in his chariot, his chief officers and standard-bearer, to set forth the conquest of Brittany by the Romans. Then followed the riders; Conan-Mériadec, and Hoel the Great, who came from the court of King Arthur in the greater Britain to govern the lesser. Mr. Lalor made a very solemn and stately appearance as Duke Alan, holding his sword with as much respect as if it had been the very same weapon with which that duke was forced to cut his way, through briars and brambles, to the ruined walls which were all that the savage and heathen Normans, who had slaughtered its bishop on its threshold, had left of his Cathedral of Nantes, once all glorious with shining roofs of Cornish tin. The warriors who had followed him to England, when driven from his duchy, who had aided him to slay the Norman hosts, who had, like him, cut their way to give thanks in the cathedral for the battle they had won, were represented by a band of gentlemen riding after Mr. Lalor. Then came duke after duke, each with the great men of his time, and here and there a duchess; and the three valiant Joans, and Duguesclin and Clisson, two great soldiers who fought the English, and, the French did say, beat them; but that, of course, I did not believe. The line of dukes ended with Duchess Anne,

who had kings of France for her two husbands, and wedded her duchy to their kingdom. Then came more cars to close the procession. On one was a little printing press, worked, as it went along, by men representing the early printers of Nantes, which had, it seemed, been a great place for printed books when they were new and scarce things. As the printers passed, they struck off programmes of the day's doings, and threw them among the crowd, with verses in honour of Nantes, "that charming Venice of France," that "*cité grave et sensée.*" Last of all came a car bearing a large and richly decorated boat, in which sat the great sea-captains who had been the glory of Brittany, and one at least of whom, they *said*, had given chase to the English upon every sea.

If all the people represented were but one half so important in their day as they were made out to have been, Brittany must have been a very great little kingdom, and Nantes a very clever city, for besides all I have named, there was the sculptor of the famous tomb in the cathedral, architects, and painters of glass, and a great minister of state, Fouquet of Belle-Isle, and I know not how many more.

Blue Beard, whom, next to Mr. Lalor, I had been most wishful to see, was played by a handsome young man with a fine black beard, which his friends said was of that bluish-black which is so uncommon. He rode

under a fine canopy of state, borne up by gentlemen on horseback, to show what a great lord he was. Of course, the poor young man could not make himself look wicked enough for the part, which, taken with his beard being only black, was felt to be disappointing. The circus-ladies, on the other hand, did not look grave or stately enough for the duchesses and valiant women of Brittany, but they were showy riders on showy horses, and so used to be dressed up and stared at that they did not mind it. If I were to tell of all the strange and gorgeous dresses and rich armour worn in that cavalcade, I should never be done. After we had seen it all twice or thrice (for when it had passed by us in one street, we took a short cut to another, and saw it begin again), it ended with the riders going to the Cours Napoléon, where they tilted and rode at the ring, leaving their cars standing in some quiet street. The *dolmen* stood before our windows till evening, when the oxen were brought to remove the car, so that I had a chance of seeing that whatever it might be made of inside, the outside was of painted canvas. Mr. Lawson, seeing me standing at the window, came and told me a pretty story of just such another set of five stones he had seen in Brittany, under which a houseless old woman had spread her poor bed, and set up her table and stool, and of how the compassionate neighbours had joined in filling up the spaces between the great upright blocks with rough masonry,

so as to shield her from the weather while she sat and spun. Then he made all clear to me he could of what I had seen, and told me how Fouquet, Louis XIV.'s minister of finance, had first started the sardine-fisheries, which before were carried on with as little method and knowledge of how to make the most of the fish as is still the case along the Cornish coast, with the fishing for our English sardine, the pilchard. I should know a great deal if I could remember all I have heard Mr. Lawson say, but I forget more than I write down; only I do recollect that he said he had begged very hard to have an omnibus to end the show which began with a *dolmen*. This was not adopted by the gentlemen who settled how things were to be done; and I must say I did tell Mr. Lawson that, if he would excuse my presuming to speak, it did seem to me not grandiose enough for so fine a show. He smiled and said, "Why not, Mary? I saw a French bishop turn out in state to bless a railway-engine on its first trip, the other day. However, without dwelling on the men who reared those blocks of granite setting to work, in the persons of their descendants, to build an omnibus, it would be appropriate to the cavalcade, in this way, that Nantes claims to be the first French town that established the omnibus system. I'll tell you how it came to pass. A little way out of the town, across the river, is a village called "Trente Moult," built, so to speak, without a street.

The houses are set down anyhow and anywhere, and, during floods, boats pass from house to house. All the French captains of Nantes live there when not at sea; but as their business lies on the city-side of the river (for vessels are chartered by merchants on the Bourse), a ferry was started to bring them over, and omnibuses to meet the ferry-boat once or twice a day, drawn by those rough little Breton ponies which are just like the Welsh; and this, they tell you, was the origin of the omnibus, which soon spread to Paris, and thence to England."

CHAPTER XIII.

Soon after this cavalcade, there was a breaking up among our visitors, both French and English. Mr. Lawson, not without regret to leave a province bearing so rich a crop of *menhirs*, *dolmens*, and *peulvens*, left for St. Malo on his way to England.

Mr. Lalor might have lingered in Nantes all through the summer, had his departure not been hastened by what he called "an appalling event." He met his own double, or, as he said, his "fetch," at a *table d'hôte* dinner in the Hôtel de France. No sooner was dinner removed, than, without staying to smoke a cigar in the society of so questionable a shape, he strode away to our apartment, which he had quitted not four hours before, and, making straight for the mirror over the mantelpiece, said that he wanted to see how a man looked who had seen his own ghost. My mistress started, but he assured her "that such things had been known to happen, and were even common in Ireland. People had died right off, straight away, on seeing their own 'fetches.' Did

Richards not think he looked pretty well under the circumstances?"

On settling down from this flight, he told how, with the soup, there entered a tall Scotchman with a long red beard, more closely resembling him in features than he could have resembled the criminal for whom he had been taken at Bourbon-Vendée. He saw this double of himself stalk along the room, reflected in the panels of looking-glass. The nearer it approached him the liker did it grow. Itself started on seeing him, and, as if drawn by the law of like to like, took the chair directly opposite to his own, and said, with a strong Scotch accent, "Sir, your's is a face that is not strange to me?"

"That," said Mr. Lalor, "was a leading question, put to make out what I might be; and when that mouth, which was too like mine, was not filled, that tongue was asking questions. I was under a spell, and answered them against my will. I felt as eager a desire to hold my tongue as I have sometimes felt to cry out when I had the nightmare, and the longing was as vain in both cases. I saw he had drawn nearly as much as he wanted from me when, after the manner of his nation, he proceeded to give me some driblets of knowledge of who *he* was, with as much caution as if he had just been told by a magistrate that all his statements might be used against him. He did not say he had noticed the odious

likeness, but his remarks showed me that he was inwardly drawing a hateful parallel between us.

"'You are not married?—Nor I. Never shall be, now, I suppose. Both of us know better. We are not the men to marry unless some one had picked us up very early—eh? I should think, though, it must nearly have happened to you sometime—eh? You ride through the country?—So do I. Find it healthy, and pleasant, and cheap, too. Go to the little *auberges*, of course, where they stick up a dry old bough of mistletoe, with two or three wizened apples tied to it, to show they sell wine and cyder, and paint on the white-washed walls that they lodge you *à pied et cheval*. It's so good to save a few shillings!' Here he hitched his eyebrows at me, and grinned.

"Now I am a poor younger brother, and do not object to save a few shillings, but this was like having a vulgar fiend in one's own likeness bringing his uppermost, and my undermost, thoughts and motives into a light that made them look so vile and sordid that I was ashamed of them. They seemed to grow meaner, and, yet, more my own as he gave words to them. He asked about my horse; and said he had ridden through Normandy and Brittany on a pony. When he came where a fair was going on, he sold his beast, and bought another; always gaining money on each change. The Breton horsedealers had called him a 'real Norman.' This was

equal to being told you were a Yorkshireman. Should I sell my horse before leaving? No! Why, if it were half so fine an animal as I made out, I might make a good sum by selling it to some one of the fast young fellows of Nantes, who were vain of having English horses. How much longer should I stay where I was? Which way should I go? Why not cover my expenses, and make money besides, as he did? He should sell that horse, in my case, and buy a little Breton pony, which could be sold at St. Malo before I started for England. Then he sounded me to learn if I could put up with such rough fare, and so few meals, as he could himself. 'Not like the English—eh? who must have their breakfast and their luncheon—their *luncheon!*' he repeated with great scorn. 'One can eat anywhere and everywhere, you know; but on a journey of pleasure you should trust to the pure air to be your meat and drink.'

"Now it struck me that, for years, I had not seen any one make so hearty and huge a meal. At that moment he was helping himself to a *vol-au-vent à la financière*, rather too freely, and with too much choice of the best bits, for good breeding towards those who were to come after him. I saw the '*béatilles*' (as Master Ernest calls them), the sliced sweetbreads, the cocks-combs, and cocks' kidneys, the carps' tongues, and truffles, vanish without stopping his tongue.

"'I call *this* a country. They know how to make the most of things here; not like the ignorant English; it raises the price of cockscombs, though; can get them by scores in England for next to nothing; they have their price here. Could not live on them for years, as I have known a young fellow do in England.' 'Sir!' said I, in amaze. 'Not an Englishman,' said he; 'a young Scot who lived in an English town where there was a big market. He kept his health, and saved his money; knew better than to buy meat; bought up all the cockscombs in the market; took them home, and made his landlady cook them; she could not concoct a *ragoût* like this, you know, but what is needed to support human life is bulk, not flavour.'

"He took so large a share of an excellent dish of ducks stewed with olives as he said this, that I made up my mind that he himself was the Scot of whom he spoke, and was now making up for old dinners, bulky but wanting flavour, by taking as much of both as he could. I asked him, if the man who lived on cockscombs throve on his diet?

"'Better than the English about him on their rich beef,' said he. 'He looked a little white in the face, perhaps (colour of the food), but he did his work, and was never what you could call ill. The town was said to be unhealthy; he did not find it so.'

"I found his spell wearing out and my endurance.

Though he pressed me to remain, I made off in all haste to you. He hoped we should meet again; and talked of looking out for lodgings in the suburbs to-morrow morning. I did not tell him where I live, but there are rooms to let in the next house to mine, and I feel certain some instinct will lead him to them. In any case, he is sure to be taken for me in Nantes. I myself could have taken him for myself. I will have to leave. I know that if I meet him again I shall come under the same spell. I must either run away, or draw his blood. That, the old women say, looses all bonds of witchcraft. Besides, I have lately been somewhat perplexed in mind. I have been a good deal thrown into the society of a lady whose character I revere, and whose name I reserve. To the usual charms of her sex she unites great energy of disposition, and much force of logic. Their impulsiveness she does indeed possess, but with her it works itself out in action. That is the formidable thing. Her fire never spends itself in vain. It does not blaze up, and then flicker away without forging something: it might weld metal into a ring—a wedding-ring. This lady has asked me, and others in my hearing, about the terms on which marriages between Catholics and Protestants are contracted in this country. Now she never asks questions for the sake of talking, nor, in fact, says or does anything useless; so soon as she sees her line of action, she proceeds without delay."

"My dear Lalor," cried my master, "you don't suppose that she will post your name and her own up at the town-hall, and proceed to fill up all the needful papers without any previous steps on your part? Even if she did, you have, in any case, eleven days left to run away in before the civil marriage can take place. Besides, if she thinks to catch a Catholic, she has many months' occupation before her in getting her papers into order, and it's ten to one that the bishop would let any priest marry you after all. You might have to go to London to be married."

"Such is her energy," said Mr. Lalor, smiling, "that I believe no obstacle could stand before it."

"Then submit," said my master (who fancied that Mr. Lalor wished to be so advised), "yield, Lalor, and be married."

"I should have to part with my horse," replied Mr. Lalor, in a gloomy manner.

After this, Mr. Lalor always spoke of quitting Nantes next Monday morning. What, at last, set him moving was not a second encounter with his Scotch double, for that he saw no more, nor could he trace it. "He was gone, sir, next morning," said Mr. Lalor. "It was as if the floor had opened, and my 'fetch' been fetched. Calling, next day, for a stick I had left in my haste to leave him, I asked Pierre what had become of a monsieur who had faced me at table. 'The great, dry

Englishman, with the large bones and the red beard? said Pierre. 'My faith, I know not. He did not descend at the hôtel, but came in from the town to dine like monsieur himself.' "

It was a little English attorney who arrived, bringing papers that started Mr. Lalor from his aimless, pleasant life in Nantes. He had money to receive, and deeds to sign. So had the Countess Monica. Mr. Lalor's business done, the lawyer went to procure the signature of the Countess, expecting to learn from her where to find a brother of hers, whose sign and seal were also needful. Mr. Lalor said before he went; that, "If that attorney could make out where his cousin, Alphonso Liguori, was lurking, he should think him a clever fellow, for, that on one occasion, all the postmasters in France had been written to for his address, with no result at all."

The attorney came back, bearing a letter from the Countess, in which she urged her cousin, Mr. Lalor, to assist him in tracking her brother. This he made up his mind to do. His way of announcing it was to enter our apartment, chanting

> "Beautiful Boulogne, I laud thee in song,
> Home of the stranger who's done something wrong!
> Ramparts commanding a beautiful view,
> Billiards and beer in the Rue de l'Écu!"

This, he explained, was not a song of his own writing,

but a poem he had copied from the blotting-book of the inn at Folkestone, where he stayed before crossing.

"It was so far suitable to present circumstances that Alphonso Liguori, who had been lost to his family for years, had gone to Boulogne, first of all, and the fox returns to his earth; so it was thought he was just as likely to be living there as anywhere else. He was known to have made the tour of the French bathing-places with a gang of gamblers."

"Will I set that little lawyer to make me a will before starting? What do you say, Richards? Alphonso may be dead, and his friends may try to pass another of the same kind off on me, who only know him by ill repute. There's money to take, and I may get into a gambling-house row, if I resist in any way. He may be alive, and, learning that I take the same that he does under the will, and the survivor takes the whole, he may think that his best way of giving a release is to release me. Do English wills hold good if made in foreign parts, that is what I want to ask you, Richards?"

"You should ask some one who knows the law better than I do," said my master. "I have picked up just enough to make me think that, if I had to make my will, I should go to London for the purpose. I hope you run none of the risks you mention; but, if you really wish to make a will, why not go to London first,

and then return to tackle this troublesome member of your family."

Mr. Lalor hesitated, and said, at last, "it was scarcely worth his while. The law would divide his money just as he should will it, and the rest of his property merely consisted of a carpet-bag and saddle-bags on this side of the water, and a considerable number of old pairs of boots and leather-breeches, which he had left at his brother's place in Ireland. He thought he could secure all he wanted—good quarters for life, and an easy old age for his horse—by a letter to his brother."

So he really did ride away. Whether or not he had a little love for Miss Dennis, we never knew; but, if he "loved, he rode away."

Of course we all knew that he meant Miss Dennis, though he tried to keep us in doubt as to whether it were not a French Protestant lady. Miss Dennis thought just about as much of marrying him as I did. She had not yet got out of her head that my Ernest was to marry her Sarah, who was pining to be out of the hospital. It was the fear of having that girl again thrown on her hands that set her making those inquiries which had alarmed Mr. Lalor.

By-and-by, my master heard from Mr. Lalor. He had ridden up to Orleans; then gone on to Paris by a night-train. He was alone in the carriage and very sleepy. To rest at his ease, he took off his boots. On

rousing himself up at the Paris station, he could only find one boot, where could the other be? He had made the whole journey by himself. All the guard and he could make of it was, that it must have fallen out at some station or other where the guard had just opened the door to tell his drowsy passenger that there was a five minutes halt, of which he did not avail himself.

The guard said that the boot should be sought, and, if found, forwarded to Mr. Lalor, wherever he might be. Mr. Lalor wrote down his Irish address, and gave it to him, thinking it was very awkward to be like "my son John," in the nursery-rhyme, who had "one shoe off and one shoe on." I was sorry he did not tell us if he entered his hôtel in such a plight; but he was just the man never to think of the obvious plan of opening his bag and taking out another pair of boots.

In Paris he met the English attorney, and they went together to Boulogne. There nothing happened to bear out his forebodings. There was no adventure at all. They found out at once that his cousin was living there. They went to his lodgings. He signed the papers, and seemed very glad of the money, but had as little as possible to say to either of them. "The lawyer took his terseness as the right kind of thing in business," said Mr. Lalor; "and I was thankful for it. The boot turned out the best fun of it all. I thought

that guard put it all down in black and white just to make a show of the French method, and organisation, and so forth. I was wrong. He searched the stations along the line, and, when I reached my brother's, there was that boot waiting for me. Before they gave me anything to eat, they brought me that boot. It was neatly ticketed. The name and address of Narcissus Lalor were hung round what you might call its neck. It had served the young folks for fun. They called it "Uncle Narcissus." The little ones dressed it up for a baby, and the older boys said Uncle Nascissus had sent his boot to manage the stables till he could come himself, just as that Swedish king, whose parliament complained that he was so long away in the wars, sent an angry message home that he should dispatch them one of his jack-boots to be their ruler. It was droll to see that boot. It is the only result of their French "organisation" which has given me any pleasure."

Last of all, Mr. Dennis summoned Ernest into Spain. He was not in strong health, and, being about to move to a part of that country with which he was unacquainted, stood in need of Ernest's services. Of course Monsieur Ernest made a great push to gain my promise to marry him on his return. I said I thought he had better not tie himself up when he was going among so many black eyes. It is not the way with the Frenchmen to speak respectfully of Spanish women, high or

low, so I pass over Ernest's assurances that I might take him for an idiot if he brought home a Spanish wife. He added, that if I did but know how sick and weary you became of the sight of those black eyes and that black hair after you had been a short time in Spain, I should not mistrust the power of my own eyes, which he said were of a mild grey, and, like the weapon in some story-book or other, healed the wounds they inflicted. He was going away; I should no longer have him jumping up in the middle of a tender speech to move one of my pans which ran the risk of passing from a simmer to a boil. I should no longer sit looking on, not quite sure that he was not what we call in kitchens a "Bessy-man," who ought to be sent packing for meddling with my work. He was going away, and he was very handy to be sure. How nicely he washed his favourite pair of trousers before he left. He would trust them to no laundress, he said. "To no woman," said Biddy, with some malice. "You'll wear them, Mary, I see, but he'll never let you wash them." Well, I thought of Jeanne, at Tours, and though not even my female friends can say that I am idle, I saw that he and I could make a good living between us, and not quarrel as to our shares of the work; so, for the sake of peace and quiet, I gave him my promise.

He asked me to write to him. "What," said I, "to have you take my letters to Mr. Dennis for him to tell

you what is in them? and for me to be forced to show yours to Biddy, who will make fun of them, as I should do in her place? I see no sense in our writing; indeed, one good thing about your going away is, that I shall not be troubled any longer with your powers of penmanship." For never did he come into my kitchen and find me out of the way, than he caught up any bit of paper that lay to hand, grocer's paper or anything (and it's little they give you in France, and loth they are to give any, and carry home your parcels you must, naked in your hand, unless you provide your own), he would cover it with rough draughts or sketches of compliments he was meaning to make me, or bits of songs he had heard at the *cafés* where they sing, which he twisted about to make them apply to me. One Monday morning, when I took up the last week's washing-bill, my mistress, chancing to turn the bill over, read on the back of it—

> "O blanche étoile que j'adore,
> Beau lys qui fleurit dans les cieux,
> Réponds à la voix qui t'implore,
> Réponds aux larmes de mes yeux," &c., &c.

Next Monday morning she looked first of all at the back of the bill, and there, to be sure, was some more of the same stuff; she passed it off kindly, and told me it gave quite an interest to the other side, which was all about my master's socks and drawers, and had a good

deal of sameness about it. Once, however, he got hold of my list before it went to the washerwoman, and when it came back to me, there, to my shame, I found a deal about "toujours" and "amour."

"En me laissant pleurer d'amour!
En me laissant pleurer d'amour!"

So it went on. Biddy, who explained it to me, laughed well at it herself; but comforted me by saying that "the washerwoman and her helpers would only think I had been copying a song that pleased me. Every one did so thereabouts." Well, as he was going, I forgave his spoiling a pattern I had cut out for my mistress by scribbling all over it—

"Sur les bords que la Loire arrose
Pour moi jadis remplis d'attraits—
Je n'y vois plus que des cyprès—ès—ès;
Je n'y retrouve plus la Rose, la Rose!"—

and I did more. I agreed to marry him, if he were no wiser on his return.

CHAPTER XIV.

My readers may suppose that when Ernest was gone I either missed him very much at first, and afterwards settled, by little and little, to my old ways and work, looking forward to his return, or else that I felt a continual want of him, and was dull and out of spirits in a steady, uncomfortable way. Nothing of the kind. If I missed him, it was after an odd manner of my own. Women do not often tell the whole truth about these love-matters, even after twenty years are gone by (do men?), but then they quite as rarely tell themselves the whole truth as any one else. I am trying to tell it now, but I know that if my old mistress were to read what I am writing, she would shake her head, and say, "Oh, Mary, Mary!" and give quite a different account of my feelings, which surely must be best known to myself. Then I should grow perverse, and maintain to her that I had never cared much about Ernest, and that my own opinion was that, if it had not been for her and my master, I should not have married him.

Here, on paper, I will admit, for once, that I liked him more than well. Both love and self-love spoke up for him. I was flattered that he should pay his court to me as if I were a lady, with verses and compliments, flowers and *bonbons*. I looked down upon the homely little bits of wooing I had known in England. An English man-cook would have let me see that he held women fit for nothing but to wash up his dishes and clean his pans. It may be Ernest thought my efforts at cooking rather feeble, but he helped me with hints, praised my steaks and cutlets, and said that my other talents were so numerous that I should be a most valuable, as well as charming partner, even if I chose another branch of industry, and left cooking to him. As for money, of course, no Frenchman ever thinks of marrying without it. When you enter a firm you must, you know, bring capital in with you in "meal or malt," as they say. You must bring your share to the stock; nor have you any reason to complain, for it costs five hundred francs of dowry to gain you an entrance into a convent as lay sister, to do the hard work for the nuns who bring more money than you do, and for less than that you can make a very tolerable marriage, if you do not look high. Ernest, however, was far better than many of the French workmen when they go a courting. He did not ask me, as they would, how much I had saved, what presents I

might expect from my master and mistress, and what articles of furniture I should undertake to bring to housekeeping.

Why, then, so soon as he was gone, did I begin to regret that I had made him any promise, and conjure up every possible thing which could be said against our marriage? Puzzling my brain with weighing the good and the ill of my engagement, I went about my work in a mooning, dull manner. Biddy scanned me, and felt sure there was something for her to make out, but knew not what word to shoot that would hit the mark; so she held her tongue, and well for her that she did, for otherwise I could not have held my peace. I was cross within myself, and still more cross because I felt sure that all of them put my gloom and languor down to Ernest's absence. I even chafed against my mistress's kind patience with me. I knew she thought I was thinking, "Where is he now? poor fellow! poor fellow! Is he well or ill? Does he still remember me, or is he taken up with those black-eyed women with their long black hair, and their combs, and fans, and mantillas? When, oh! when, will he come back? and will he care as much for me as when he went?" What I was really thinking ran much in this way: "Oh, dear me! if he should come back just as silly about me as he was when he went, what will become of it all? I shall have to marry him, and he is only a Frenchman after all; and,

like all the rest of the men, he'll engage for anything while he is courting, and promise everything, and all the rest, and all that; but who knows what he will be like when he has me tightly tied to him by the mayor and the priest? And, besides, it may be that when I suffered my brother to speak to the priest at Douglas, I bound myself so that I may have to ask that priest to loose me, and he may not have the power, nor any one below the Holy Father himself, whose charges are too high for poor folks, and who might leave some little thing loose, of which a French husband might take advantage, and leave me, like poor Biddy, in doubt as to whether I were not a bigamist." So now I, too, began to take an interest in all the ins and outs of the French law of marriage, and, from what I heard, I could just make out that there were so many forms to be gone through that it seemed a wonder there should be fewer folks single in France than in England, and so very easy to omit something the want of which made your contract void, that if it were worth any one's while to get you unmarried that might be done much more often than it is.

I had more time for brooding after this foolish fashion, now that the Lawsons, and Mr. Lalor, and the friends whom they used to bring, were all gone. Then I had many a little dish to cook in a hurry, and could work off my doubts and troubles. A brisk handling of the

poker, now and then, gives great relief, and I have known the sharp scouring of a pan save me from scolding Biddy. One day she noticed this by saying, "I know, Mary, ye're giving a dressing to some one else when you scrub that frying-pan so spiteful." Alas! I had not pans enough to clean and make dirty again now. Nearly all my master's old French friends were gone for change to some seaside place. Even Aileen, with whom I now and then used to exchange some little cuts and thrusts, had given out that she, too, required sea-air after that dull, wet winter, and should take it by going to the cherry-picking up the country, which lasts a fortnight, and is the resort of all the boys and girls of that country-side, and has a great name for mirth and match-making. Just after she left, Biddy's boy, Michael, broke his apprenticeship, and ran away from his master. None of Biddy's children was ever in the wrong unless with herself, so she put all the blame on his master, and all the rest on Aileen, who had filled his head with such stories of this cherry-harvest that he was supposed to have followed her track. To comfort the poor woman, Patrick, the second, and even the twins, Donatian and Rogatian (so called after the young brothers, the martyrs and patrons of Nantes *), were earning more than a few pence by killing May beetles.

* Donatian and Rogatian are "the great twin brethren" of early Breton history, always turning the tide of battle in favour of the men

That was an unusual year, and after the high floods and rainy winter we were now beginning a hot summer, which brought with it a plague of insects. So numerous were these cockchafers, such as we have at home, and those of a smaller kind which only appears in England in very warm Junes, that a pompous circular was sent forth to all the mayors of the department, "urging them to redouble their former efforts, and set in motion all the means at their command to secure the destruction of these redoubtable *coleoptera*." Nor were the mayors alone recommended (and, added the circular, they could not be too much recommended,) "to give themselves up without ceasing to the annihilation of the May beetle, but landowners and their labourers were urged to second the habitual zeal of the mayors, in order to diminish the reproduction of that scourge of agriculture, the white grub."

These were brave words to use about cockchafers and their little white grubs, but there are seasons when the grubs consume the germ of crops past counting, and, in those seasons, cockchafers abound as locusts.

As the authorities pronounced that "there was an

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of their own province when seen "riding in front of their array." They are called the boys or children of Nantes, and their images some years ago were to be seen at the angle of a richly carved wooden house, now pulled down, which was known by the sign "*Aux Enfants Nantais.*"

imperious necessity for labouring without interruption towards so desirable an end as the extirpation of the cockchafers," they were good enough to point out the best way of catching them. This, it seemed, was to surprise them early of a morning, when they might be found hanging on the trees, and still numb from the chillness of the night. You were to agitate the trees, they would fall, and then you could pick them up. When you had filled sacks (provided for the purpose), and secured them safely, you must present them to the mayor, who (deducting the weight of the sack) would reward you at the rate of eight francs (susceptible of being divided by fractions) for every hundred of kilogrammes.*

I wanted to know what was next done with them. My master said that, fond as the French were of conserves and skilful in making them, he did not think they candied the cockchafers with sugar, and ate them as dainties, as was done in Italy, but they were quite sure not to waste them. So it proved, for I afterwards found that the great nuisance of their dead bodies being brought in to such a large extent, led to the Government chemists (who test all manures used in France) trying if they might not be made to improve the yield of corn they would have eaten in the seed if living. Being

* A hundred kilogrammes are equal to two hundred and twenty English pounds.

found to answer for manure, they are now laid into troughs cut in the ground on purpose, and, let us hope, fully reward the "habitual zeal of the mayors, and the unremitting activity of the landowners."

CHAPTER XV.

THE same weather that brought these swarms of cock-chafers, and sent such French families as could afford it, and all the English who were not new-comers like ourselves, to the sea for refreshment, had much to do with my falling into what I now know to have been a poor state of health, but what, at the time, was taken both by myself and those about me for an attack of low spirits, unconnected with any ailment of the body. Neither they nor I knew that I was ill. If I had been aware of that I might have traced my gloomy thoughts and distrust of Ernest to their true source. I had no symptoms of illness but such as might go with any trouble of the mind. I was restless in body and fretful of temper. My sleep was broken, and my appetite almost gone. This I put down to distaste for French food, but it was distaste for all food, as I should soon have found if an English dinner had been set before me.

Now, if Ernest's absence was at the root of all this, I can only say that, to this day, I am not aware of it;

and, what is more, I do not believe it, nor will anybody ever make me believe it. Mr. Lalor's absence, if you like, and Mr. Lawson's, the absence of our visitors, who were at the sea (I had had to cook for them, and to wait on them, and I liked to have enough to do). Aileen's absence and Sarah's, if you like (for they kept my tongue in practice), but not Ernest's.

My mistress, who saw me lose flesh and colour, and begin to show my Irish cheekbones, became uneasy, and one day questioned me so long and closely, that I gave her what I still hold to have been a very true account of the state of my feelings. She let me have my say, but did not believe it. The utmost she would grant was, that I told her the truth so far as I knew it, but added that I was too proud to own that I fretted for Ernest, and hid it even from myself.

"But, ma'am," said I, "I could wish that I *did* care for him, or that he would do something to provoke me, or anything else that would shake me up a bit. How can I be fretting for a man of whom I do not think twice in one day, and that one time I may think of him is to wish I had never given my promise?"

"Mary," said my mistress, "though you don't feel as if you missed him, the want is there. It is like the food for which you do not hunger just now. You say it is a trouble to eat, but I see you faint and feeble when you do not force yourself to do so."

In came my master, while his wife was pitying me and giving me sal volatile. Of course he must be told all, and I found that for once he knew better than my mistress. "It's your stomach, Mary, that is out of sorts, and not your heart, I'll answer for it. You were pretty sure to feel the change of diet sooner or later. You got through it well at first, but it has you now, and all the more because of this unusual kind of weather. Dr. James meant something of the same sort when he talked of his 'home sickness of the stomach.' *I* understood him, for I have had the complaint myself, and pretty sharply too. The first time was the worst: I came to France a young fellow with a very slight knowledge of the language, and a deal of business on my shoulders, which kept me anxious. I had to keep my ears open to pick up French, and my mind on the alert lest I should make blunders and lose other folk's money, and my own besides. The mode of living seemed to suit me, and all went well enough until French was easy to me, and my affairs went smoothly. Then, I had 'leisure to be sick,' and you'll be ill indeed if you surpass me. It was a warm season like this, and, like yourself, I drifted gradually into a dreary state. When the unconscious strain under which I had been living ever since I had left England had ceased, or French ways having become matters of course, and all things that I had been so much on the alert to notice so habitual that they lost the edge

of their outline and freshness of their colouring,—when the language sank into my ears without my making any effort to apprehend it, and I began to find myself speaking it unawares, then I found that, with the effort and the strain, the novelty and excitement that had borne me along came to an end also. All freshness was gone; and, as it flowed away, there rushed in an intolerable craving for England,—a longing for the sound of English speech, a hunger for English food. I fought hard to overcome it, for I could not at that time leave France; but my struggles only made me worse. To try to throw it off was mere kicking against the pricks. Don't you try, Mary, but do as I did on my next attack: say to yourself, 'this is an ailment which will run its course, I must wait and be patient till its time is out.' The second fit was much milder than the first, from my knowing better how to manage it. I found drugs of no use; and I advise you not to try them, but to bear it as well as you can; and if you cannot eat, keep telling yourself that you will eat some other day. You only complain of loathing your food and feeling uneasy; I was much worse, which is some comfort for you. My longing for home was very keen and painful, and I was ashamed of it, and thought it mere foolishness in a man who had his money to make. You seem to take well and kindly to France."

Indeed I did not just then, and thought I never should;

but I was ashamed to conduct myself to so good a master and mistress as if I were a silly Sarah Higgins, so I kept to myself that I longed for England quite as much as my master could have done. It seemed thankless to tell them I could never be happy in France, when they had brought me away from my trouble in the Isle of Man. Besides, the thing that gave me the most disgust of all, was the way in which I saw myself. "Here you are," said I to myself, "no sooner run away from one young man than you let yourself be talked over by another; no sooner out of a country than you wish yourself back in it. 'You must be patient, Mary,' says your master to you, 'and your mistress must send you as much out of doors as she can.' If he had said you had not enough to do, and that he would give a few parties to keep you moving,—or if your mistress had acted like a mother to you, and given you a good shaking there and then, they would have shown more sense."

However, it was settled by both that I must be idler still, leaving Biddy to do my work while I took the fresh air. This medical treatment was begun that very day. My master brought out his cognac, made me fetch some hot water, mixed what the French call a "*grogg*," saw that I drank it, then ordered me to put on my shawl, and take a walk.

After that, I was sent on all errands, and bought everything that was needed, and was made to go out walking,

besides, when nothing at all was wanted. This last I thought very tiresome, and more wearying than real work. I think now that it was overdone; I had not been used to take long walks for the sake of health, as some of the gentry do, nor for pleasure, as my master did. The weather, too, was very warm and moist; I grew worse instead of better. I could not tell whether my languor was of mind or body, but languid I was. Even shopping did not stir me up. I had not spirit enough left in me to *marchander* (as they call it, that is, to beat down the prices asked by the shopkeepers), as it was my duty to do, and would have been my pleasure, had I been anything like myself. I paid just what I was asked in a tame and helpless manner, but fretted and chafed all the time under the sense that the shopkeepers thought me silly for not haggling with them, and that so I was. What could I do? My will was to chaffer with them, but my nerves were so unstrung that, if I had begun to debate, I might have burst into a weak passion of tears; so there was nothing for me but to slink into a corner of the shop till other people had brought their bargaining to an end, take what was offered me, and pay for it without a word. My French, which up to spring had come readily enough to serve or common purposes, with the help of signs, now seemed about to leave me altogether. Not only did I lack words, but I wanted that vigour to utter them quickly and

firmly, which gave me my only chance of making any impression on the shopkeepers. I listened with wonder to people who were "like other people;" that is, who would stand in a shop debating long and patiently over a few *centimes*, and testing and trying the quality of goods with a care of which I had never seen the like in England. Though I was ashamed to feel the contrast between myself and them—I so spiritless, they so much on the alert—I yet watched them with a sort of disgust. It seemed such a mean fuss about the tenth part of a penny. When I was well, and in good spirits, I could look after my *sous*, but now not even a *franc* seemed worth the trouble. Their shrill voices distressed me, and I could have wished to be caught over to England, and never to hear a word of French again. I was learning all the time, but I did not know that. Listless or fretful as I might be, nothing escaped me. While standing in my corner, I picked up many minute ways of testing the worth of what you want to buy, which have since stood me in good stead. They would seem to have passed from mouth to mouth for ages. One would think they had been worked into a system by a people that had given its whole mind to marketing, and getting the full worth of its money, and not by a warlike but lively people, such as the French.

It must be owned that they are a great nation, great in great things, and surpassing all others in small

matters. One day, on going to a shop on the quay to order some coal, I found a gentleman in the shop, and waited till he had bought his two bushels. While he was talking I looked at the samples of coal which were kept in the shop. As coal must be brought from England, it is, of course, rather dear at Nantes; and as it is burnt in stoves, they do not need such good coal as we burn for cooking in England, so that you seldom see any of the finer kinds. I thought all the samples poor stuff, but I only tested them with my eyes, while the Frenchman, who was buying, took up bits of coal, put them into his mouth, and ground them between his poor teeth, to try their grit and grain. The shopman did not seem to think this odd, but only a proof that he was knowing. He was a doctor, so being used to drugs, he might not mind a little coal-dust. This was an instance, *en grand*, of that thrift born with the French, which is almost an inborn matter of contempt in England among servants, and those sprung from the poorest class, for, as they say in France, "none are so wasteful as those who have been reared on raw potatoes." I might have given as an instance of thrift *en détail*, that a cook will turn over every egg in a basket to pick out the largest; but as I have heard of a country where an egg is bought by weight, I hold France to be surpassed in that point of detail.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNFIT as I was for shopping, I liked even that better than just putting one foot before the other, for the sake of my health. I always tried to make myself believe that I had something to see or do when I was sent out walking. I would linger about Biddy's favourite haunt, the Place de Bretagne, to watch the traffic on the market. The merchandise began with bones, broken glass, and the refuse snatched by sheer fighting from the lean dogs that linger about the dust-heaps in the streets, and mounted up to the contents of a low class of curiosity-shops. There were battered and rusty things in tin and iron, such as a tramper would throw into hedge or ditch in England, or gypsies leave on the ground where they had camped; and there was *bric-à-brac*, such as Mr. Lawson had thought worthy of his buying. I used to wonder what a gentleman, such as he, could find fit for his notice, but I knew I did not see with his eyes. Still it gave the place some credit that he

should have rummaged its stalls, otherwise I should have thought it very "low." This, Biddy told me, was one of my "English notions," and I must say that both buyers and sellers in the Place carried on their bargaining with as much zeal and seriousness as if it were commerce on the great scale.

I soon grew weary of the shrill clamour and ceaseless movements, which were part and parcel of eager bargaining over some pot or kettle mended till it was as good as new. When they were not scolding on the market, they were singing. Indoors or out, I could never get out of the sound of singing. Françine, on the floor above ours, came from Berri, and had a store of country airs, all very sad, and with much sameness about them. My mistress used to keep her door open to listen to Françine's songs, which put her in mind of the Scotch airs, and Mr. Lawson had tried to take down the words from her mouth, but was always baffled by her fitting the words of songs of the day to her old, old tunes. He was sure, he said, that she had the old words, but she was ashamed to give him anything that was not fresh from Paris. It was just like her nursery-rhymes. Nora and Harry had chanted in his hearing some charming baby-nonsense they had picked up from Françine. This Mr. Lawson wrote down at once, and begged Françine to be kind enough to write him down all things of the kind she could remember. She smiled,

and said she would do so; but when she had filled half a dozen sheets of paper for Mr. Lawson, and wound up with a promise to give him "the rest in the next number," and Mr. Lawson had put on his spectacles, and read eagerly, as if he thought to find something precious on every page, he was provoked to find nothing of the kind he wanted from beginning to end. Françine had said her rhymes and old songs were too stupid. "She was not going to make herself mocked by writing down such old stuff." So she copied him things *she* thought pretty, including a song or two by M. Béranger.

I liked Françine's singing when I was well, but now it made me cry, as indeed any doleful air, played on the worst of barrel-organs, would have done at this time. Another girl, who sewed all day, sang all day, too, to keep up her spirits. She was a gay girl, with a ringing voice, and would attempt any *grand morceau* she had heard at the theatre. So did her lover, a young painter, who made a dash at any showy bit he had heard last Sunday, after the manner of most young Frenchmen. As I passed along the streets, above my head, through open windows, from courtyards, at every turning, I could hear workmen flourishing away at some *grand morceau.* Once I was a little hasty with Célina (the girl on the ground-floor, who never let one rest from her singing). After that, whenever she saw

me pass, she would break out with some song that, to her mind, suited my case, such as,

"L'amour, ça fait souffrir ir ir!
L'amour, ça fait mourir ir ir!"

This vexed me more than enough, but I had brought it on myself, and it did me good, so far that it roused me to hold up my head, indoors, at any rate, and force a show of better spirits.

Another of my haunts was the Quay. It was not much to one who had been used to Liverpool, but, such as it was, it put me in mind of my early days. I would sit down on some block of granite, and watch the loading and unloading of small craft, with here and there a ship freighted with sugar from the colonies. It was rare to hear any language but French spoken, unless it were Breton, which was (Biddy told me) the French way of speaking Irish, only they pronounced it so ill that she could make no sense of the words. Once or twice I did hear English spoken, and, though it made me cry sorely, I lingered about for many an hour afterwards to have the chance of hearing it again. I might, however, have waited for many a day, and heard or seen none but fussy and slovenly French sailors in *sabots*, for I will say that, though they smarten themselves up a little for their own ports (as if France were the only country in which it were worth while to make some little approach to neatness), they are so down-

right dirty when in foreign ports as to contrast with Italians and other foreigners, without naming English sailors.

Two things, besides, I used to watch on the Quay. A quack-doctor, of the sort you see at English fairs, a kind of "cheap Jack" for pills, had set up a little stage in the open air. To him the poor people used to come on fair-days and fête-days to have their teeth drawn. One feels for a man who goes in at a dentist's door. There is a decent mystery, which exalts his sufferings; but there is something laughable in the pangs and grimaces of a man who has his tooth wrenched out in the sight of all comers by a tooth-drawing mountebank, who, when not at work with his forceps, is holding up a tooth of such a size you can hardly believe it to be human, and proclaiming it to be the biggest tooth he, or any one else, ever drew. The other interest, for want of a better, was to see the frogs meant for cooking cleansed by washing in the river. These frogs were larger than ours, and, like every living creature in France, made much more noise than the live thing matching it in England. It was a comfort to see some of the tribe spitted on wooden skewers, that is their legs and thighs, for all the rest was thrown away. Not that one was a bit the better for it, for, if so many frogs were put to silence, the people who cried them through the streets restored the balance of noise.

I have not said anything about the fish-market, for fishwomen and fishfags are the same all over the world. There have been holy fishermen, but did anybody ever hear of a sainted fishwife? So that though I still say everything makes more noise in France, I must allow that fishwomen do keep such bad tongues in their mouths in England that, it may be, they are not outdone even in France.

I tired of the Quay also, and came to loathe the streets. The sameness of the new town, and the dirt and decay of the old, were equally wearisome to me. The gay shop-windows, set out with so much skill and taste, had lost their novelty. As I passed the cookshops, their dainty odours sickened me. So did the peculiar smell (which does not amount to a smell, but flavours the air you breathe in foreign houses) of charcoal, or of coke and poor coal burnt in stoves. I did not even enjoy the charming perfume given out by the coffee being roasted, which I had before held to be one of the pleasures of the streets.

Finding myself in so silly a state, I took my master's advice at last, and tried cleaner air. I began with a visit to the public garden, which was then a new thing, and thought a wonder. Of course, I turned English eyes of scorn upon it, and, besides being in its early days, it was poor enough after the gardens I had seen in England. Still, just as I had been surprised during

the winter to see the camellias in full blossom on shrubs as large as our biggest laurels, so now I could not help wondering at the great magnolias, growing like lime-trees, in full blossom, and shedding an exquisite perfume over the whole garden. Few things in France have, in my time, been more improved than flower-gardens. Nothing like the care and pains were spent on them in the King's time that there is now. With the exception of fine *Reine-Marguerites*, or China asters, which were like dahlias for size and splendour of colour, most of the flowers which I had been used to see double in England were then single here, and looked like wild flowers.

Next I betook myself to walks at that side of the town which is called "*la contrée.*" It is by no means a French fashion to take country-walks except on Sunday, when the whole town strolls out. To find my way to the *contrée*, I followed the cows that were led out by little boys and girls to graze during the daytime. These poor little "Kerries" (so my master called them on account of their likeness to that Irish breed), were led by halters through the streets, for this is not a land of liberty, like England, where cows with calves, and even bulls, are left to make their way through crowded towns, and passers by must take care of themselves as best they can. These poor little cows used to be tethered where they could crop the grass of the bank

round some corn-field. I would sit down where the children who watched them could not observe me, and cry at the thought of English hedge-rows, and the hay-making going on in England. Haymaking was going on in France, also, but I could not walk far enough to reach the great meadows by the side of the Loire, and it would not have been like an English haymaking, if I had seen it. In France the sun makes the hay; men do but mow the grass, and often leave it to itself till it is thrust into barges coupled together that they may carry a large load up to the town.*

I left myself sitting on one of those banks (planted with trees, where trees will grow), which are to be found in Brittany; some, low fences of soil a man can cross with a stride, others, walls of earth-work, nine or ten feet high. The pretty brown lizards darted up and down my bank, crossing each other's paths at every moment. On a bit of old wall near me swarmed the "creatures of the Good God," the beautiful French lady-cows, more beautiful than ours, with slender black bodies marked with tiger-like patches of vivid scarlet. The grasshoppers (so I call them, but they were much larger than those I had seen in England) ran in and

* I do not mean to say but that they often put it into cock as in England, but the trouble needed to be taken with it is much less, and down by the river the simple way I have described is very common.

out of holes, and uttered their shrill cries. If I tried to catch one, its note stopped as that of a cricket stops, and it was back into its hole in the instant of an instant. While the sun shone their noise was endless, and the sun that summer went shining on day after day for weeks, whether one was well or ill, till I longed for a cloud. and grew weary of the hard blue sky.

The grasshoppers seemed allied to the sunshine, and when the great heat of the sun was over they were silent; but I was not a bit the better off, for then the frogs began croaking. They were not so noisy as they had been earlier in the year, but if you have only heard English frogs croak of an evening, you can form no notion of the powers of the French frogs. They can make themselves heard at such a distance that, out among the fields, it is hard to get beyond the reach of their wearisome noise. As I said before, it is such a comfort to think of their being cooked and eaten, and yet, for all that, there never seems to be a whit the less croaking!

We had been used to smile at Mr. Lalor for grumbling that he never got sleep enough for a man of his height, but I felt for him now. He had lodged on the side of "*la contrée.*" His first hours of the night were often spoilt by a freak of Frenchmen which seems to give them a delight in which others cannot share. A couple will post themselves about half a mile apart

from one another, and go on for hours answering each other at intervals of a few minutes on the dreary French hunting-horn. If they can, they choose places where an echo prolongs the discordant sound. When, at last, they were tired, and Mr. Lalor was settling himself to sleep, glad that noise was at end, "then," he said, "began that other dreadful nuisance of the nightingales in the shrubbery of his garden." "That bird," he said, "had been made too much of. It was well enough in England where it made less noise, and in its proper season, which was when you wanted to do a bit of sentiment, and were glad of the help of a nightingale, or a glowworm, or a little moonshine, or anything else. For his part, he should like to see all these French nightingales 'baked in a pie,' on condition they would 'not all begin to sing as soon as the pie was opened.'"

Well, I thought it was a comfort that people did cook them in some places, but as for those frogs!—to be cooked was too good a fate for them. I had read in the life of the Holy Francis of Sales, how he freed the citizens of Geneva from the obligation to find men to walk about all night in order to prevent the frogs from hindering the sleep of the Prince-Bishop. Now, indeed, I knew what a very great saint he must have been, if he could put up with the noise of foreign frogs.

A cock that *would* crow in the sunshine in a yard behind our house was enough to make me cross just then—indeed, I still think a cock's crow in the daytime a sound to make you more and more dismal if you are a little so at the beginning. Biddy, when I grumbled, said it all came of my English bringing up. If I had been reared in Ireland, I should have been used to the cock and hens all roosting on a perch across the inside of the cottage-door. "It's England spoils one for the good old Irish customs," said she. "I know it by myself, for I went once on a visit to my mother's people, and when I heard the cock crow close by my bed, about two in the morning, I up and got a stick and knocked him down from his perch, and thrust him outside, telling them I had never come all the way from England to have that baste crowing over me at all the hours he pleased.

"You see I was spoilt for ease and comfort and letting things go dirty, having learnt from bad teachers to go down on my knees for scrubbing, as well as praying. So I found myself a wonder where I was, and all about came to have a look at me, and were terrified that I, with a good gown to my back, would speak to those that were not of my flesh and blood, but only neighbours' children, when I was better clothed than they were. I didn't take even one out of six young men who pressed me to stay where I was, and marry them all at Shrove.

I did no better for that. They were idle, and liked to stand and smoke with their hands in their pockets, and I took up with another who did much the same thing. It's my thinking, Mary, you made too little of that young man when he was here to be making so much of him now he's absent."

CHAPTER XVII.

BIDDY about this time told me that I was "walking myself off my poor legs." She had thought so for long and long, but scorned to say a word that might look as if she feared to do any work that might fall to her share in our kitchen; all who knew her would say, if they told the truth, that she cared neither for cooking nor eating, but she liked dirtying the pans for the sake of making them clean again. She added, "I can't see you digging your grave with your own toes, Mary Ryan, and losing all the substance of your flesh, and getting your inside more stuffed out with whims and fancies every new day that happens, without telling you that all this tramping will never do ye anything but harm unless you vow it to the Holy Virgin, and make a tramp once for all to her chapel, set upon a white mountain with two peaks to it, where the girls go to pray for plumpness."

Biddy paused to note how I took her plain speaking, and her means of curing me. As for the pilgrimage to

Loc-Maria, it was only the last of a long list of remedies which had been urged on my trial. Every day Biddy brought me some new recipe gathered from her mother, or the neighbours. Many *ptisanes*, or, as we should call them, *herb-teas*, still obtain belief in England, but they chiefly find it among country-people in obscure neighbourhoods. They do not flourish openly as part of a system of making your medicine at home. Now, in France, saving people gather their own herbs in their due seasons, dry, and otherwise prepare them to save a druggist's bill. I cannot remember half of what I was advised to take, but there was sage-tea, which some old people in the north of England still, like French folks, prefer to real tea, both for flavour and wholesomeness; balm-tea, and my old enemy, camomile, I had, of course, seen taken before. Once Biddy, in her kindness, decoyed me into an apothecary's shop, and he gave me such a list of *ptisanes* which might be suited to a case like mine, that I was glad indeed no French doctor had been called in to see me, if such messes were what any of them would order.

The *pharmacien*, or druggist, put my ailing state all down to "humours in need of being purified," to "laziness of the stomach," and to a "disposition to contract fever," which was, he said, "very common in the spring and autumn." "These rebellious humours might," he said, "be combated by a *ptisane* of the lesser centaury,

or of that useful febrifuge, the burdock; or of night-shade, which was held to be one of the most cleansing *ptisanes;* or of soapwort." Now, of course, soapwort did sound as if it might be likely to cleanse humours, but was I to take it on the mere word of a French druggist that my humours stood in need of being cleansed? I said that I would think over all the good advice he had given me, and, to pay him for his trouble in talking so fast, I bought some *pommade* made of cucumbers, which I had heard was very softening for fretted skin. He was a civil person, and spoke a little English, though he owned he was "not very stout in the language." He was not very willing to let me off without a *ptisane* of some kind, and pressed me, if I liked none of the others, to let him prepare me a tonic and aromatic infusion of wild thyme, which was very useful against headaches and troubles of the digestion, would fortify me, and, perhaps, be less distasteful to my palate than any of the rest." Still, I said no very firmly, being inclined to think with poor Sarah, who would and *would* have it, that though they might, if they liked, tell her that the mixture which they were giving her in the hospital was "a compound of mallow-flowers, mullein-flowers, poppy-flowers and violet petals—all of which were full of precious properties for coughs like hers;" yet, say what they would, she was certain and sure that the foundation of it, and of all their other doses, was snails.

It was not that either Sarah or I doubted the nourishing properties of snails; we had known them taken in England by consumptive people among the poor, and I would sooner have taken a few cooked snails than a live and lively little frog, such as I have seen swallowed in the spring of the year by weakly people. You put your froglet on the palm of one hand, give it an adroit tap with the other, and it hops down your throat before it knows where it is—so much the worse for *it*—but *you* ought to grow fat and strong; above all, if you can swallow a dozen or so, as I have known a man do as if they were oysters. This I have seen both in France and England; indeed, few are the ways of one country you could not match in the other if you knew all the out-of-the-way places in both. I never come to the end of it. Some old saying or custom that I remember to have heard or noted in my young days in the North, or on my English journies, comes up to me again in France, just as I have nearly forgotten it.

Though Sarah disowned frogs and snails, she had a great belief in the virtues of a live spider swallowed in currant-jelly, which she told me had been the medicine her mother gave her when a child. If she had not been so ill as she said before, she did seem ill now, and I felt sorry that I had been hard upon her. It was quite true that she was very silly, and rather ill-natured, and had never been quick, and fond of handsful of work like

myself, but now I could not but own that though I had more pride, and could keep my uneasy feelings and nonsense to myself, there they were, and every bit as silly were they as hers. I used to go to see her in the hospital on all the days when visitors were allowed to enter. I told myself that this was to make up for my past harshness, but I daresay it was partly to treat myself to a little gloom in her company. It did me good in this way, that my spirit rose against ever letting myself down to be like her, but it did me harm by keeping alive my longing for England, and filling my head with her dismal stories of how badly she and the rest were used by doctors and nurses. It seems to me that sick folks in hospitals, unless they are very ill indeed, give their minds to making up stories of neglect and harsh treatment by way of having something to do. I thought the patients all looked well cared for, and the comfortable-looking sisters of charity, reading to some, writing letters for others, and playing at chess or dominoes with those who could be raised in bed, were not to be seen in England in my young days. Sarah could not complain of them, but she always said some one in the next bed, or ward, for anything I know, was being very ill-used. Her own grievance was still that every one wanted to convert her—doctors, nurses, and all. Now any one who knows doctors, particularly French doctors, would own that this was about the last

thing that would come into their heads; and how the nurses *could* do it, seeing that they knew no English, nor she French, is more than I can guess; but Sarah maintained that they would do it in the end by means "of them little pictures, which made her blood to curdle every time they came in her way." Whether her blood curdled or not I cannot say, knowing more about milk curdling, or eggs, than that; but it was quite certain it did not circulate well, and Biddy said that "it was all the fault of those hospital-doctors. A kind Christian had once got her in to see if they could straighten her back, and good it was for her to rest it, and well she felt when she left, and a big candle did she offer to the good Lord, as was his due, but she did not like the ways of them high doctors who are called so clever. Their learning lies in dogs'-nosing your complaint, which means finding out how all you've got wrong inside you shows itself by outside signs, and when they've got to know your inmost state, they are so pleased and joyful that they think they'd better let it stay just as it was when they put it down pretty on their papers."

Whether Biddy was right in this or not, it was plainly to be seen that the hospital-patients, even those just coming round after bad operations, were not nearly so well-fed as they are in England; and it was alarming to notice how quickly they sunk at the very last, and how

rapidly they were buried. Every time Sarah bade me good-bye, she said that the next time I came I should find her dead and buried within the twenty-four hours. I never did find *her* dead or buried, it is true; but I found, every now and then, some one missing from a shop where we dealt, and was told it was from illness; on going next, the answer was, "he, or she, is dead and buried." It is true that the law compels burial within forty-eight hours; still, after living in the country for so many years, I have not quite got over the shock of missing people one day, it may be, from counter or market-stall, and getting an invitation to their funeral the next.

Life is treated rather lightly in France, especially elderly life. In England, we take more pains to keep old people alive; I do not say they love them less in France, but the notion is that they have had their day; their time is come, "*Que voulez vous?*" and a common saying is, "*il*" or "*elle a assez vécu pour faire un mort.*" If I render this "he," or "she has lived long enough to make a corpse," how badly it sounds! Yet kind-hearted people in France say it glibly and gaily.

If Sarah did not die, she so worked upon herself that the doctors said she might die from fretting herself into a low state, unless she were removed from the hospital, and, as soon as might be, sent back to her own country. My belief is that she tried to get herself removed by

working on Miss Dennis and the ladies who came to see her, with those fine stories of the risk she ran of turning a Roman. At any rate, Miss Dennis took the alarm for her body's health, and brought her off to her own apartment, until she found a cheap chance of sending her to England. She sat by the kitchen-stove in her apartment, or ours. This kept me on my struggle to keep up, for, however ill Sarah migh be, she did like to make nasty remarks upon me and others. So I held my head high; and Célina,—who had said, as she saw my thin face, "Ah, it seems we are going to have a funeral from the house instead of a wedding!"—now sought to talk more with me, and finding I made very light of suitors, would have it that I was just like herself. "She was adored by Dominique, and Armand, Paul and Felix; bah! she cared for none of them, not even him she was going to marry. Never would she lose her dinner for any man's sake, rather she would eat the more." Indeed, she had a steady plan of eating to increase her good looks, for her promised husband liked plumpness, and she thought it was well to do her best to suit his taste. After, if his taste were not suited, and they did not live on those friendly terms which make life sweet, and she did not find him labour to assure her a happy position, "she could always take him in hand." "How would you help yourself then?" said I. "I would thrash him," said she; "not so as to make a scandal, you know.

People who are discreet, and make their reflections, will not set themselves to work 'hammer and tongs,' and cause the neighbours to make them music with pans and kettles. *"Bah! on peut toujours se battre, et même se battre bien, sans faire des éclats!"*

CHAPTER XVIII.

I LIKED Célina when I knew her better, for she had more of the gaiety for which the French nation gets credit than any girl I had yet known. Her fun was rather rough, but she had no sister, and living all her childhood in the country, where she had romped with three brothers, had made her what is called a "tom-boy." She was very fond of the two lads who were younger than herself, but she doated on the eldest. To please him, she was going to marry. He was bent on her becoming the wife of his most intimate friend. She freely owned that she preferred another young man, if it were worth while to interest yourself much in whom you were to marry, or even becoming, which she had been far too well brought up to think it could be. "It is quite the same to me whether or not I marry," she would say; "but it is expected of me, and there is something droll in not doing like the others. This one will, if he remains industrious as he is now, give me a happy position, and I shall content a brother for whom I experience the most tender sentiments. I like my future

husband well enough when away from him, and that other when I am with him. All will arrange itself, and I shall accommodate myself to marriage."

These were new notions to me, though, in France, they are simple moral rules which it would be as shameful not to teach your girls as to let your boys pilfer. I do not mean that all the young women are to marry to please their brothers; that is a noble and heroic deed, an act of friendship which not every one has a chance of doing; but that it is silly, selfish, and likely to lead to the most dismal results for a young woman to set up any fancies of her own when a suitor neither very old, hump-backed, nor blind of an eye, is led to her by her parents, is one of the "few plain rules" to which the "few strong instincts" must give way, knowing their place. This rough girl, with all her wild and random sallies, would have thought me ill brought up, and wanting in a sense of duty to my family, had I been silly enough to tell her of that foolish trick I played in the Isle of Man; but she would never have agreed with me that my folly lay in listening to my brother at all; no, she would have made out that, had I had any tender friendship for my brother, I should have accepted, even with complaisance, a man who was his friend, and not wanting in money; in the trust that so amiable an act of sisterly devotion would meet with its due reward in its due time.

I was getting well as the good fruit ripened. Long before, my master had said I should mend when the pears were mellow, and so I did. How am I to speak well enough of the pears of the Loire? All the pears I had ever eaten in England were no better than if they had been cut out of turnips, by the side of these. The little Duchesses, which they should call Princesses! The great Duchesses, that are large enough to be Empresses! There are pears still finer in sort, but the Duchesses I mention because I was struck with wonder at their size and cheapness. I had fruit from my master's table, but, if I fancied more, I could buy it here without feeling myself wasteful. The grapes were small, and there was nothing about them to surprise me, except that I could buy them; but the finest plums, even such as they call the green apricot, which is the best kind of green-gage, were as cheap as damsons in the plum-growing counties of England. I hungered for them, and for the sweet, good bread, and the fresh, clean-washed salad-stuff, and ate as if I were a Frenchwoman. My mistress was glad to see me improve. My master knew I could not help doing so when the pears came round; "and," said he, "those Duchesses will go on into November, I can tell you, Mary, for your comfort."

Mr. and Mrs. Richards, seeing that I was now becoming more fit for my work, did what I had all along maintained they should have done sooner, that is, they asked

some friends to stay with them. These were English people from Dinan, but I need not describe them, as nothing came of their visit, except that my head and hands were once more filled with work, which was much for my good. Biddy and I were, indeed, kept busy, for our visitors were of the kind which dislikes to dine at a *restaurant*, and will hold out for English dishes, and loves real, early tea-drinkings, and not French cups of tea at ten o'clock at night, and all that. Our old visitors, too, had come back, party by party, from the sea-side, or from journies. Even Biddy's boy, Michael, came back at last; Biddy cuffed him and hugged him to her heart's content, and took him to all the priests and sisters she knew, to be well lectured and advised, and wrote in triumph up to Tours to tell the Abbé that now there could be no question that her boy wanted reforming; so perhaps he would do something for her, and put her lad into that reformatory, lest worse should happen him. She boasted to me how meekly Michael took her blows. "He was fierce as a lion," she said, "but gentle to her, as being a woman and a cripple, let alone his own poor mother." I should have seen him with the father, when that run-a-country-man thrashed him for some boy's trick. "My father," says Michael, in his French (he was but a little fellow, the darling, but he set himself at the father like a turkey-cock), "I do not understand you: '*Mon père, je ne vous comprends pas. Vous n'êtes*

pas Français du tout. Je ne sais pas comment vous êtes bâti."' Biddy's boy seemed, at any rate, to fall on his feet. She had the luck to find a place for him as kitchen-boy at a *restaurant*, under a M. Camille, who had cooked with Ernest at the hotel. He told her he had once or twice had a letter from Ernest since he went to Spain. Ernest spoke of himself as being well in health, but weary of the barbarous country, and in desolation (as was but right and proper) at being so far removed from the object of his most tender vows. Michael Noonan was quite willing that his mother should lay the blame for his wanderings upon Aileen, and had told us (between his tears and his prayers that he might neither be kissed nor boxed on the ears) that he had last seen her at the *sabot*-fair of St. Nazaire, to which the country-folk go to lay in their year's stock of wooden shoes. He had nodded to her from the back of a fine white horse of wood he was riding on the merry-go-round. She said the fair was "*très-laid, très-vilain*," but that, he thought, must only have been because she could not divert herself, not having enough money to enter the shows. She had come to the end of all she had, up at the cherry-picking, and had stood on a tub to have her hair cut off for sale, that she might raise enough to bring her back to Nantes. Biddy's vigour in wishing that Aileen might never return had no effect. Aileen was one of those who are sure to return. The next thing that Biddy heard was

that back she was, as smart as ever in her dress, and with money to pull out of her pocket, too. Of course, the first use she made of it, was to buy a kind of caul, covered with braids of other people's hair. Nora Dennis, who had been smuggled to visit Aileen by her old ally, Françine, told us of this wig, which, the child said, "lay on the top of Aileen's chest of drawers, when she was not out walking, beside the pot to make her cheeks rosy, and her dirty, greasy candlestick; and she snuffs her candle with her hairpins, and then sticks them back into her hair." It was with Biddy's mother that Aileen was lodging, so Biddy, who had slept in our house since I had been out of sorts, asked for time to "go and speak a word to her mother." I knew it was *words* that they would come to about Aileen, so I was against her going, for I was certain it would end, as their scoldings always did, in the mother telling Biddy to take her children away and care for them herself, if there was anything about her ways that did not give satisfaction. Poor Biddy must always submit; for what chance had she of earning bare bread for those children if she stayed at home with them? However, she would always have her scolding out, though she well knew the end of it. As luck would have, Aileen had left the house, and was well-placed; so said Biddy's mother. Thus Biddy was forced to content herself with a general view of Aileen's character, an order to her children that none of them

should "dare to shake hands with that painted viper," whose fulsome language was enough to set fire and water fighting," and a hint to Françine that Miss Dennis should hear of it if her girl, Nora, or her boy, were taken any more into such bad company. Françine flew at her, of course, but I think she took the warning; for though Aileen might sometimes be seen loitering on the stairs, she seemed to come more for the sake of Sarah Higgins, who still sat grumbling by the stove, than of Françine. Sarah would even creep downstairs to gossip with Aileen by the porter's seat. She had no other allies. Célina's mother would not let her speak to Aileen, and when she came up to me, smiling and mincing, but only half at her ease, I freely let her know that she moved in spheres and circles quite beyond a plain servant like myself. I did think she paid me off after her manner; that each time she was seen in the house, Sarah was more peevish with me, and the porter and his wife more surly and crabbed. Biddy, too, told her trouble, that her boy Michael was more led by "that serpent's adulations and blandishments," than guided by the "hand of the mother who had washed all his little corners, in and out, when he was an infant with no more harm in him than what he was born with."

That hand of Biddy's had hit him so very hard, in my presence, that I could not at all wonder that Michael should choose to keep out of its reach. One day when

Biddy was out, the boy came into our kitchen, roguish and smiling, and looking smart and tidy in his cook's white cap and apron. He put into my hand a letter addressed to me in French, and was for making off before his mother's return; telling me that if I left an answer with the porter, he would call for it on the next day. I kept him till he let me know how he came by that letter, for it seemed to me to be in Ernest's writing. "Oh, M. Camille sent him. It had come inside a letter to M. Camille, who sent his most respectful compliments to Mademoiselle Marie, and would be happy to enclose any note with which she might intrust him, and favour his friend, in his own letter of reply, which must be posted to-morrow. Now take your hands off, mademoiselle, or else those of Maman will soon be on."

The lad ran off as soon as I loosed my grasp, and I sat and looked at my letter till Biddy came in. Though he had written against my commands, I felt in good humour with him, and smiled over the writing I could not read, and thought of what seemed to be now quite old days, and of what could be the reason Biddy was long in coming. At last she came, and sat her down to read me my letter. There was not much of it, but it was very friendly, or loving, if you want the true word. Still it was rather puzzling, for what there was of it, besides *amour* and *toujours*, spoke of some trouble he had got into, through the misdeeds of some one else, who

had thrown all the blame on him, and caused him to lose his good wages and the favour of his master. "He thought it due to his honour to tell me the whole, that I might take the earliest opportunity of driving him to despair by giving him up, or, of making him the happiest of mortals by assuring him of my faithfulness to him, whether as a well-to-do chief of the kitchen, or as a humble under-officer, with a heart and mind too great in proportion to his salary. He hoped to find good employment at Madrid; where he was told he should be welcomed by 12,000 Frenchmen. The uncivilised Spaniards made no effort to compete with his fellow-countrymen in the art of the kitchen; nor even in those less exalted branches of art, hairdressing and tailoring; which were, however, susceptible of being so handled as to be more than the mere means of gaining your living. The Spaniards yielded these professions to the French as above their own capacity and below their pride. Thus, at Madrid, he should be sure of the means of dragging on an existence, which would be wretched until I gave him some assurance of my constancy."

"I wish," said I, "that he had left out all that talk about Spaniards, and tailors, and hairdressers, and the fine arts, which you and I, Biddy, have heard from him twenty times over, before now, and told me what it is some one else has done, and he has been blamed for

doing. What stuff to write to me about the tailors! They all think their art a finer one than his, and so do the hairdressers." "Each man talks his own trade up," replied Biddy. "That M. Camille told me most of this before, for he wants to better himself; and Ernest had been telling him to try Madrid, and be the twelfth thousand-and-first Frenchman in that city. As for his telling you what scrape he's got into—if you look for the true likeness of that from a young man, you are not so knowing as I take you to be, Mary Ryan, or you are much more in love than you are willing to let on. All I know is that it's far from like the masther's doings to turn him off in that hurry in a strange counthry, unless he's been after some mischief much worse than common."

"Is it like Ernest's doings to deserve being turned off like that?" said I. "Miss Dennis had a letter from her brother only a week since; and he named how much better he was in health since Ernest had joined him. He was then on the wander, and could give her no address, but Ernest was with him, and well-spoken of—now, *is* it likely? What do you say, Biddy?" for she was slow to answer me.

"I dare not say anything,' said Biddy, slily; "but I do like to see you pepper up, Mary. You can't think how pleased I've been lately all within myself to have you fidget and worry, and drive me about with your English words and ways. When sick folks fight with a

feather, they've taken the mending turn. I have that respect for you that I'd rather you scolded me than kept on scolding yourself as you've been doing for long and long. I'm sorry it's for no better reason than a young man, but I'm glad to see your eyes brighten as they watch that letter. You'll maybe own to the truth now Mary, (just for five minutes, and only to me, Biddy, by the way of beginning a good custom). You've thought a good deal more of that boy, Mary——"

Now was Biddy's time. She had me in her hold. I neither could have read nor answered that letter without her. If I had gone to my mistress for help, the scene would have been much the same, allowing for the difference between a lady's smiles and gentle hints, and Biddy's direct attack on me. So, as Biddy was shrewd enough to say nothing to give me offence, I let her enjoy her little bit of a laugh at me, remembering how long she had been obliged to keep it to herself. It seemed to do her good. She wiped her eyes and settled to serious talk as soon as I thought she had had enough of it. Her advice was that I should put off answering that letter until she had seen M. Camille, and make out from him, if she could, the reason why Mr. Dennis had parted with Ernest. "Not that there was much chance or hope," she said, "of getting one young man to tell her the truth about another; for if this Camille thought anything hung on it, he would feel it to be his part as a

Frenchman to tell his stories quick and thick to save his friend." I did not much like the notion of putting questions about Ernest to any one but himself, unless it were to Mr. Dennis. I knew well that I could not stop Biddy when she had made up her mind to sound M. Camille, so I was glad that she was thwarted by circumstances. For it fell out that, when she made her way to the *restaurant*, the only person she could see was her boy, Michael; who told her M. Camille would only scold if he were called away from a hare-pie he was making; as for seeing him in the evening, that was all nonsense, for as soon as his office-hours were over M. Camille gave himself up to making music in the society of a few chosen friends. Michael added that she would cost him his place if she came after him so often. Now, Michael's place was just worth Biddy's peace of mind; so she saw the lad, who had kept half the glass-door between her and himself while speaking, dart back towards the kitchen, and crawled home to me, groaning that the boy as he grew older, was becoming ashamed of her for a poor cripple, as she was.

Before we went to bed, I had that letter written that my mind should be clear of it. I told Biddy what to say, and made her read it over to me when written, that I might be sure she had not put in some of her own flights of the tongue. Then she copied it as fairly as she could, and it looked well enough on the paper. I had laid

down to her that it should be friendly and comforting, moderately affectionate, but with none of that nonsense about *amour* and *toujours* in it. Said Biddy, "I can't see how I'm to let him know that you mean to keep steady to him, however he may be placed," if I mayn't write *toujours*. Well, *jamais* might do nearly as well. It's *jamais* I'll just be putting in." "No, no," said I, in a hurry; "it was but this day, as I waited at table, that I heard Mr. Richards tell a story of a man's nearly getting into great trouble through using that very word *jamais*. It was with our English consul the master was sitting, when in came an Irish sea-captain with his papers. The consul saw him through his business, and laid him down the rules. Instead of saying, 'Yes, sir, I'll do it,' the captain keeps moving his hand like a Frenchman and saying, JAMAIS! JAMAIS!' The consul loses patience, and says, 'How dare you say '*jamais*' to me, sir, when I tell you what must be done? I'd have you know my powers, sir!' and he brings out a book, and reads the law to the poor man, who learns that he may be sent to prison unless he takes back that *jamais*. He humbly begged pardon of his honour, and said that, knowing very little French, he had that often on his tongue, and had found it very useful when he had to fight his way in a foreign country, especially when they brought him in long bills, but as for meaning that he would never do what his consul

bade him, that was and would be the last thing in his mind. So we will not put in *jamais*, as it seems likely to lead to misunderstandings, but you may write *toujours* if you will only write it once."

Next day I met Michael close by our door, and gave him the letter and a packet of *bonbons*. He ran off with them, grinning, and giving me one of those knowing French winks which are called by the name of *clins-d'œuil*. The young vagabond! It was but a few weeks before Biddy was again in grief through his conduct. M. Camille left for Paris to seek a higher place, and this set Master Michael thinking he must be moving likewise; so he goes to his grandmother's, rolls what clothes he has up in a bundle, and takes his little brothers out for a walk. Once on the Quay, he tells them he has brought them to see him sail in a fine ship, as a brave sailor; but it was as a mere *mousse*, or cabin-boy, that he started on a corn-vessel bound for the Bristol Channel. He shouted from deck, to tell Patrick not to let poor little Donatian and Rogatian, who stood staring at him and crying, fall into the water. Patrick was, also, to give his love and duty to his mother, and to tell her he was gone to find his father, and to bring him home to make her happy; and to offer his respects to Mademoiselle Marie, and inform her that he had found her apple-sugar very good, and that, if she wanted more news from Madrid, she must go to Mademoiselle Aileen.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Go to Aileen!" said Biddy, for her mother brought her this bad news of her boy just as both of us were at a high pitch of wrath and wonder, to which we had been wrought up by a second letter from Ernest. "That's a true word, though he spoke it. It's to her we must go, I'm thinking. She is underneath all this, ye may depend upon me." *All this*, meant the strange contents of Ernest's reply to my letter. First, he thanked me for keeping on with him, when he had given me reason to suppose that his good name had suffered, and his place been lost. There was no warmth about his thanks. Any one would have said he had rather wished me to have done the opposite; still this was nothing compared with his impudently going on to tell me that he had made up the whole of the story of his being under a cloud, by way of trying the strength, warmth and endurance of my regard for him. He was now fully satisfied, and praised himself mightily for having been able to awake and keep up such feelings

in the breast of one who had given herself the air of mocking at the power of *l'amour*. Everything would now go well. He was not at Madrid, but with his master, and would entreat me to bear with patience his absence for some time longer.

As this was slowly dealt out to me by Biddy, who read the French, turned it into English, and then read the French over again, to make sure, I did indeed feel a great impatience of his absence. I wanted to have him in the room, just to have the satisfaction of telling him to walk out of it. Was it for him to lay such traps, and to draw from me, by falsehood, an admission that I had not thought him so boyish and absurd as I had always told him he was. I was angry with myself, but I utterly despised him. "He has not even the making of a villain in him," said I. "He has done his best, but he can only reach up to be shabby."

"He is *lâche*," said Biddy; "I never thought he would turn out to be only a *pancaliers*."*

As I talked myself into greater heat, Biddy, as is the nature of things, and way of men and women, began to grow cooler and more considerate. She put her two hands to her head, leaned her elbows on the table, and

* "*Pancaliers*" is the name given to the tall cabbage of Jersey and Brittany. It runs up to four feet, but forms no head in proportion to its height, hence it serves to give a nickname to men whose deeds do not bear out their words.

read that letter again and again, till I thought she would grow stupid over it; but she told me to let her alone, she was only pondering. All that came of her thinking was, that she said, at last, "I cannot make it out, much less put it together; but, sure I am, there is a woman at the bottom of this."

Then I had my turn to speak. My mistress, hearing my tongue working harder than it had done for months —I might say years—grew uneasy, thinking that, perhaps, I had found Biddy doing something wrong, and left her drawing-room to learn what could be the matter. I told her the whole tale as I stood, being too warm to smooth my story. She listened with surprise, read the letter through and through, and laid it down, remarking that "one never could tell what was in Frenchmen." Still she had not thought Ernest like the common run. No doubt he had been led away by some woman, who had drawn him into insulting me, to make sure of a breach between us. Biddy nodded and smiled when she heard Mrs. Richards confirm her own remark. With this, in came my master, who had missed his wife and followed her into the kitchen, drawn by the sound of our voices. His own account of it afterwards, was, that such was our fiery state, that, on coming into the house, he was met by a hot blast, and, on reaching his own landing, he found the place like an oven.

Just like a gentleman in business, he would not hear

what was told him without putting his questions at every sentence spoken, and doubting and limiting us in a way that is very unpleasant when you are heated and hasty. Though, perhaps, I ought to have been glad and thankful, it made me cross when he said, at the last, that he did not believe the letter was from Ernest at all. He thought him far too decent a fellow to write it. There was no postmark. I was the best judge of the writing being that of Ernest. All he could say was, that it was in the current French handwriting, but was more like that of a woman than of a man. Had I any of Ernest's writing? If so, we could compare it with that of these letters.

"No, indeed, sir," said I; "do you think I would fill up my boxes, which will barely hold my clothes, with his bits of scribblement? I cleared them off as they came in my way. They did very well for singeing poultry."

"Well, then, who brought this letter? This second, at least, did not come through Camille?" Biddy went downstairs to ask this question of the porter, who told her it had been left with him by a person of her own sex. As to her age and looks, he would say nothing more to Biddy than that she was "not one to frighten the men when they looked at her." This the poor soul took as a scoff at her own crooked back, and asked no more questions.

"It might have been his mother," said my mistress.

"Far too worthy an old personage to be mixed up in such a trick. She would have come in form to break the match off, as well as make it, had it been needful. One good thing I see is, that Mary cannot write to him."

"I am sorry for that, John," said my mistress; "it would relieve her so much to tell him there was an end of it."

"If there *is* an end of it, that completes itself—no need of saying so. It will ease her to *talk*, I know; but that she will do, whether or not she writes. We shall make it all out some day, Mary, or think it not worth the trouble. Let him alone, and he'll come home and cook me some more snails, and you will plague him to your heart's content; and then your mistress will be all on the fret about losing her precious Mary, who knows all her ways, and I shall have to hear that she never hopes to meet with another like her."

Each of us takes what happens in his own way. Mine was to gain flesh and colour after this, and move about the house, not only briskly, but gaily. My spirits were real, and, at times, I caught myself whistling over my work. I whistled very well, but had been so often checked in doing so, that it was years since I had heard my own notes.

My mistress, at first, thought that I was putting too

much force on my feelings, and dreaded an entire break-down on my part. Afterwards, I think she viewed me with gentle wonder, and settled in her own mind that I could have cared very little about Ernest, after all. My master said it was all the work of the good fruit, and the advance of the season. Biddy, who had taken it up as if Ernest were "her own husband a-batin' her by letters," was proud of me, when it began to fix itself on her mind that she had come across one girl at least, at last, who would think of "them" (that is of the other sex) according to their merits, and not fret for them when they were not worth it. As for me, I had been too much roused not to shed a few weak tears to myself, by myself, for a week or so after that last letter. Then I rallied, borne up by a good, hearty contempt for the man, for it was hardly for a moment that I allowed myself to believe, with my master, that Ernest was all right, and would return as he left. I was above consoling myself with another Frenchman. I told them that I should marry in England, if I married at all. After that being understood, if they chose to send me their little nosegays and verses, and ask me to dance, it was quite their own affair.

CHAPTER XX.

Miss Dennis, who was very anxious to get rid of Sarah before the winter, found means, through the Consul, of sending her cheaply to England on board a little coal-vessel. We heard afterwards, through Mrs. Lawson, that Sarah picked up her spirits on arriving, and offered herself as a cook, asking high wages, on the ground that she was a mistress of French cooking. She could not keep her place more than a month, and her mistress gave her the character of not knowing one joint of meat from another. Sarah tried to pass it off as if she had only been used to French joints, which were small, and not so coarse and ugly, but she knew as little of French *gigots* as she did of English legs of mutton. That was the truth.

The next thing that befel us was that, in the beginning of December, some family affairs called my master to England. My mistress chose to stay where she was, as her letters gave her to know that a great deal of snow was falling on the other side of the Channel. In-

stead of seeing my master back at the fortnight's end, as we expected, there came a letter from him, saying that a brother of my mistress had urged him into taking up an affair which would carry him into Spain, and make him work as hard, for a short time, as if he were again in business. She had often wished to make a journey into Spain; now was her time, if she chose to go. His condition was that she must be ready to start on his reaching Nantes. He should not even have come round by Nantes, had he not wanted letters of introduction from those of his old friends on the Bourse who did business with the north of Spain. He enclosed a letter to Mr. Dennis, which he begged his sister to direct to his present address in Spain. She might take Mary with her, but as little luggage as possible. Mistress and maid must bear in mind that Spain was not France. Though he had never been beyond San Sebastian, even so short a journey showed the difference. We must make up our minds to rough it, if we went with him.

My mistress and I had not a moment's hesitation, unless it were as to what clothes we should take. I thought we should want summer-clothing, but my mistress shook her head, and bade me remember how laden with wrappers and cloaks were all the travellers who came up from Bayonne and Bordeaux; so much so as often to provoke smiles in warm, wet Nantes. We

had been long enough in one place to hail a change, and I felt younger again when once at my old work of pulling things out of drawers, and putting them into boxes. I did not mind the jests aimed at me by the French in the house. Some said that I was going to take possession of my castle in Spain (this means much the same as a house in the clouds); most of them thought that I was sure to meet Ernest, but when I looked at the map, I saw there was little chance of coming in his way, the country being so broad.

We did not know where we were going before the arrival of my master, except so far as he had spoken of getting letters for the north of Spain. This caused my mistress some fear lest he should embark us in a little steamboat which then ran monthly from Nantes to Santander, and was thought to be very dangerous and irregular in the winter season. To our comfort, I found, by asking on the quay, that she was not due at Nantes for three weeks to come, and my master, once set moving, was certain not to wait so long as that. He came in one Sunday morning, looking as if he wanted shaving very badly. My mistress saw he was too busy and fagged to bear being asked questions. He said he was hoping all the way that we had not made ourselves ready to go with him. He had found nothing but snow from Calais to Paris, from Paris to Orléans; however, as it was only raining at Nantes, and very mild, it might

be fine where we were going; so if we would go, we should. The place to which he was bound was the town of Santander, which, in Christian language, means St. Andrew's.

After he had breakfasted, he went about the town picking up his letters of introduction, which were all ready, as he had asked for them by the same post by which he wrote to my mistress. I thought it was no wonder that my master had made his fortune in trade if he went to work as he did now. He did not seem the same man who allowed himself to be teased by Mrs. Smith and Miss Goodman; that was when on a mere tour; now he was on business. He had got all the papers he should want ready when in London. That he might not lose a day in Nantes in having his passport put into order, he had procured a passport for Spain from the English Office for Foreign Affairs; besides letters to all the English Consuls at the northern ports of Spain, desiring them to aid him in case of need. All I could make out was that it was something about a ship laden with timber, and I doubt if Mrs. Richards heard much more that Sunday; the master was so busy while the daylight lasted, and so sleepy towards dusk. He said he *must* have a thorough good night's rest; he had not had a night's sleep for some time. We, too, must make the best of that night; we should not have another in a bed till we reached Bayonne on Wednes-

day. There my mistress might stay, if she were tired, while he went on into Spain.

But by the time we got to Bayonne (which was not until Wednesday at noon, instead of early in the morning, on account of the bad state of the roads) my mistress and I were almost as eager to go on as he was. We had become interested in his chase of the deserted timber-ship, and keen in our wish to save it from the Spaniards. My mistress dreaded so heavy a loss befalling her brother, who was its owner, and I felt for her; besides, I liked the sport and spirit of our undertaking. The whole story came out when we were settled in the Bordeaux diligence on Monday morning: On reaching London, my master had found his brother-in-law much disturbed by news having been posted up in the long-room at Lloyd's that the captain and crew of one of his ships had been picked up by another ship's crew, and landed at Yarmouth, having abandoned their own vessel, as water-logged, some hundred of miles from the coast of Spain. There was thought to be very little hope that "the derelict," as they called her, would be heard of again. This blow had fallen on her brother a week or so before my master's arrival. About ten days before he left England, Lloyd's agent at Santander sent the news to London that a large vessel had been seen off the coast of Spain, drifting towards the port of Gijon. This, too, was posted up at Lloyd's (which is a place

where they insure the lives of ships), and stirred up all the insurers; every one trying to make out whose ship it could be. Most people thought that it was more likely to be that of my master's brother-in-law than of any one else.

The captain of the deserted ship had in the meantime come up to London. He stoutly maintained that it could not be the *Fleur de Marie*. He had stuck by her till her case was desperate. He would never believe that a vessel in her plight could live to be seen off the Spanish coast. He had not a doubt that she had foundered. This shook some people's opinions; but, shortly after, there comes another message, telling that the fishermen of Gijon report that a great ship, laden with timber, waterlogged, and with no one on board her, is driving on to their coast. On her stern there are left one or two letters of her name, which almost identify her with the missing vessel.

This led to a meeting of the owner of the ship, the owner of the cargo, and the underwriters (or insurers) taking place in London. All were interested in saving what they could. There was a general opinion among them that, if Mr. Richards could be induced to take the trouble, they could find no one so fit to make the best of the business. It was not such a journey as he would have taken by choice, at his mature age, and with winter coming on sooner and sharper than usual. Still, he

thought of the heavy loss to his brother, and of all the little children to whom he was as an uncle, and agreed to go to Spain. On the other hand, the three parties who had separate, though not opposite, interests must, he bargained, each give him full power to act wholly on his own judgment, and be content to leave the entire conduct of the affair in his hands. No one stumbled at this; all were thankful to have him take the matter up. So here we were in the Bordeaux diligence, with my master unfolding his maps, and putting questions about the roads and the coast to a kind and civil Spanish gentleman who spoke French.

It was impossible not to be carried away by my master's steady zeal for his work. I caught his spirit of speed, and, thinking all the while of when we should sight that ship, took so little note of our journey, that I remember less of Bordeaux and Bayonne than of the poor little roadside halting-places of our first journey by diligence. The *Nantais* were for ever bringing their city into comparison with Bordeaux, though their object seemed always to be that of showing that there was little likeness between the two. Bordeaux, I had heard them say, was the seat of *commerce en grand*, a city of wealthy merchants, whose fathers and grandfathers had been wealthy merchants; Nantes, the town of *commerce en détail*, where men made their own fortunes, or were in the way of making them. I often hear this said

now, so am sorry that I can recall nothing of Bordeaux except the broad quays, and the great ships lying in the noble river.

At Bayonne, I was in a kind of maze from want of sleep. My master left us as soon as he had seen our luggage upstairs, and we lay down on our beds, after some vain attempts to procure warm water by asking for it in French. No one in the inn spoke any language but Spanish, unless it were Basque, which is neither of a French nature nor a Spanish nature, nor of any other, according to the books. To find French of no use while still in France, seemed a wonder; but even at Bordeaux, many a man puts his trade on a sign-board in French and in Spanish, side by side.

My master came back to us in good heart. His passport, on account of which he had been obliged to halt at Bayonne, had been found to be quite in order. He had made all the needful inquiries, and taken places in the *malle-poste*, or royal mail, for Vitoria. It did not start till eight o'clock next morning, so that we should have a full night's rest. He must push us on as fast as he could, lest we should stick in the snow somewhere. He had heard that there was plenty of snow on the Spanish Pyrenees, but none by the sea; so had taken the *malle-poste* for Vitoria, rather than the diligence for Bilbao, because, though the road was longer, the mail would get us more quickly over the ground. He hoped to reach

Bilbao by Friday, and Santander on Saturday, so that we should be able to spend Sunday, which was Christmas Day also, quite at our ease. On Monday he must leave us there, and push on to Gijon, but how the dickens he was to get there, he knew not, for Monday was a great festival, hindering all kinds of work. All he could make out was that he should most likely have to hire mules at Santander, if he could. We did not take much notice of my master's forebodings about the weather. We were used to them. Sometimes they came true; oftener they did not. As night came on, however, the diligences from Spain brought in the news of heavy snow falling among the mountains, and it was foretold that we should need oxen to draw us, long before we reached Vitoria. Scarcely were we five miles out of Bayonne before the rain began falling fast. We caught dreary glimpses of a hilly and barren country, with the sea to our right, and mountains in front. We made the best we could of the dismal rain, thankful that it was not snow. My master drew out his guide-books, and read us what he found about the different places where we halted. Bidart, St. Jean de Luz (the last town on the French side), and Urugne (the last post-station before you come to the French custom-house). As I only saw them through rain or mist, I did not think much of them; nor do I remember what he read, unless it be one little story which took my fancy, and perhaps

stuck in my memory because it was told of a Frenchman who was a cook. My master read it into English out of a little dingy, old book, which, he said, had been put into his hands by Mr. Lawson, whom he had met in London, not without a charge to take great care of it, as the volume was now extremely scarce. Mr. Lawson had told him he would find it pleasant reading on his journey, and not a bad guide, although written in the year 1679. It was by a French lady of rank, who was the fashionable novel-writer of her day, and is still well known in English nurseries as the best European teller of fairy-tales.

"According to Madame D'Aulnoy," said my master, "Spaniards and French must have stuck pretty tightly to their own side of the frontier-river in those days, for she says, that half a quarter of an hour before passing the Bidasoa not a soul would have understood her had she spoken Spanish (or Castilian, as we must mind to call it now), and in another *demi-quart d'heure* after crossing, her French would have been of as little use. Now we find that Spanish has got up to Bayonne, and French to St. Sebastian."

"Is this the frontier-river, Sir?" said I, for we were approaching.

"Not yet. This is the Andaye, and now Mary, I'll tell you about that poor French cook who fell in with a lot of Spanish Maries. Madame d'Aulnoy was a great

lady, and journeyed in a manner suiting her rank, laying in before she started 'a good provision of money and of patience, both of which,' she tells us, 'are essential to those who travel in Spain.' She travelled with two litters drawn by mules, each attended by a master-muleteer and his servant, both mounted. She had six more mules for her men-servants and luggage, conducted by four more mounted muleteers. She was often escorted, for part of her way, by gentlemen to whom she had letters. They made parties of pleasure for her, or took her a little out of the road to show her sights. Thus, when she came to Renteria, which is near St. Sebastian, she and her suite were taken in boats to the entrance of the harbour, where they saw three great galleons belonging to the King of Spain.

"'These little boats,' says Madame d'Aulnoy, 'were adorned with painted and gilded pennons, and rowed by young maidens of charming grace and skill. There were three of them to each boat, two rowing and one steering.' These girls are tall; they have fine figures, dark complexions, admirable teeth; hair black and lustrous as that of the jay; they plait it and tie it with ribands, letting it fall down their shoulders; on their heads they wear a little veil of muslin, embroidered with silk and gold-thread, which floats loosely round the neck so as to cover it; they wear ear-rings of gold and pearls, and coral necklaces, and boddices, like our

gipsies, with very tight sleeves. I assure you they charmed me. I was told that these girls swam like fishes, and that they did not suffer either men or married women to come among them. Theirs was a kind of little republic, to which girls came from all parts, their parents sending them when young. When they wish to marry, they go to mass at Fuenterrabía. It is the town nearest to their dwelling-place, and there the young men go to choose a wife to their taste. He who desires to marry one of them goes to the house of her parents to tell them his wishes, and settle all things with them. When that is done, they inform the girl, and if she is satisfied with it, she withdraws to her home, where the wedding takes place. I never saw a greater appearance of gaiety than in their faces; they have little cabins along the river's bank, and are under old maids, whom they obey as their mothers.

"'They were giving us these particulars after their own manner, and we were listening to them with pleasure, when the evil one, who does not sleep a wink, stirred us up some strife. My cook, who is a Gascon, and of the lively disposition of the people of that district, was in one of the boats behind us, sitting by a young Basque girl whom he thought very pretty; he did not content himself with telling her so, he wished to raise her veil, and was very urgent about it. She understood no jests, and without a word with it, she broke his head with

the boat-hook which was lying at her feet. As soon as she had performed this exploit, she fell into a panic, and threw herself into the water, although the cold was extreme. At first she swam with great swiftness; but as she was in all her clothes, and it was far to the bank, her strength began to fail. Several girls who were on the shore got quickly into their boats to go to help her; but those who were still beside the cook, fearing that their companion would be drowned, threw themselves upon him like two furies. They were bent on drowning him. The little boat went none the better for their struggle. Twice or thrice it was nearly upset. From our boat we could see the whole of the quarrel, and it was a sore hindrance that my men could neither part them nor quiet them. I assure you that the indiscreet Gascon was so hardly handled that he was all over blood. My banker told me, that when these young Biscayans were provoked, they were fiercer and more to be dreaded than young lions. At length we gained the shore, and we were scarcely landed before we saw the girl, who had been rescued at the nick of time, for the water was getting down her throat when they drew her out. She came to meet us with more than fifty others, each bearing an oar on her shoulder. They marched in two long files, with three girls at their head playing on Biscayan drums. She who was to speak advanced, and addressing me several times as *Andria* (that is to say,

Madame), which is all I have retained of her harangue, made me understand that they would either have the skin of my cook, or due payment for the damage done to the clothes of their companion. As she ended speaking the drummers began to beat harder than ever, raising loud cries, and these fair pirates went through the oar-exercise, leaping and dancing the while with much style and grace.*

"'Don Antonio, my banker, wished to settle all things peaceably. He thought that my cook, who considered that his beating was enough, had good grounds for not choosing to pay any money, so he himself distributed some coins among the troop. At the sight of this, they shouted louder and longer than ever, and wished me a fortunate journey and a speedy return, every one singing and dancing to the Biscayan drums.'"

"These young ladies," said Mr. Richards, "look prettier in print than the dozen or so of old women who push and pull the old wheelbarrows on the quay at Boulogne; but, when I was at St. Sebastian I was taken to see their representatives of the present day, and I have no recollection of their grace or beauty; all I remember is, that they wore hats covered with ribands. Perhaps all

* Don Antonio, a banker of St. Sebastian, had come all the way to the Bidasoa, to meet his client, Madame d'Aulnoy. How he paid himself for his pains may be read in the amusing "*Relation du Voyage d'Espagne.*"

the old maids of the community were out that day. Still I see that the plain-spoken Mr. Ford doubts if the name of women 'can be given to such amphibious fish-fags.' Well, you shall judge for yourselves if we come back by St. Sebastian; but if Mary here ever took up the rolling-pin (which would, I suppose, be what would answer, in her case; to the other young woman's boat-hook), and served Ernest so, I don't wonder at anything!"

CHAPTER XXI.

On reaching the custom-house on the French side of the Bidasoa, we got out of the coach, and in a pause of the rain, walked up and down on the bridge between the two countries, while the *douaniers* rummaged our boxes. This spared my temper; Job himself never had all he had packed neatly and compactly with his own hands turned upside down twice within one hour as I had that day. No sooner had we done with the French, and seen the things upset into our boxes, in the same style in which they had been pitched out of them, than we had to see another set of dirty hands fumbling at what they could not fold. Spaniards or French, they seemed to me much the same. I did wonder at the young women of my own class in Nantes, who made as much to do about custom-house officers and *gendarmes,* as some ladies do about officers of the army, partly on account of their uniform, partly for the sake of a salary which was pretty secure.

My master, to spare our feelings, drew us away from

the horrid sight to an inn, where we began our life in Spain by breakfasting. We entered through a stable, and looking about us, found that the door leading to the dining-room, and the staircase to the bedrooms, were only to be reached through that stable. Such are "the things of Spain!" Of course, the French had done their best to alarm us before starting. I had been told that some of the condiments of France were the aliments of Spain; that we should have to live on rancid oil, chick-peas, and garlic. This was not quite true, but I could not tell what the dishes were made of. They were greasy to sight and taste, and over-seasoned. Pimento —which is thought too strong for French cookery—and saffron, were the chief seasonings here, and garlic certainly seemed to be treated as a vegetable, not as a flavouring. Two women waited on us, with long plaited tails of hair tied with ribands, hanging down their backs. The post-boys, too, and muleteers, we saw were all stuck over with bits of riband, and most men we passed on the road wore red sashes. Their clothes might be in ribands of rags, but they would have their shreds of riband. If I write as if out of good-humour, it is that I cannot do otherwise when I think of those two custom-houses; as for the inn, we had to put up with worse inns than this, which was in sight of the French mountains, before we ended. At the time I thought that in all our previous journies, I had never seen any

thing so rough, nor even coming near it, except the inn at St. David's, where the geese and the pigs looked in at the parlour-windows.

We were now quite among hills with snow lying on their slopes. At one stage we would find four mules waiting for us, at another six, and the postillions were increased in number likewise. "It was a good thing," said my master, "that we had taken the *malle-poste.* Otherwise we should not have found these extra mules in readiness, and might have stuck in the snow somewhere on the mountains." Rough as was the weather, the postillions were showily dressed. The mules wore bells past counting. If gay clothes and ceaseless tinkling could have made us forget the dreary road and the desolation of the hills, we had them, but the farther we went the deeper was the snow, and as it grew dusk, a yoke of oxen was always in waiting, to be put in front of our mules. It was a difficult journey, and, to me, it appeared dangerous, for, so far as I could see, the road always ran along steep mountain-sides. My master did not appear uneasy, unless it were about the chance that even the *malle-poste* might not reach Vitoria that evening. Our guard was the only man about us who spoke French. He spoke it so ill that my master could not understand him. At all the little roadside inns where we found relays of cattle, Mr. Richards put questions but got no answers; no one knowing a word

of French. Still the oxen and the mules dragged us on, and, though it was late at night, we did, at last, enter Vitoria.

Mr. Richards had made out that the *malle-poste* (for I cannot bring myself to call that thing the mail-coach a second time; that name bringing to the mind of people of my age a turn-out with which this Spanish affair had nothing in common but wheels), stopped at a sort of coach-office. If he wished, as he did, to catch the Bilbao diligence at six o'clock next morning, he must sleep at another inn whence it started. While there was any daylight he had worked hard at some of those little books which profess to teach you Spanish in a few days, or hours, it may be, and made himself master of some phrases, which he used with vigour enough to bear down the efforts made to induce us to stay where the *malle-poste* stayed. A man was found to show us the way to the other inn. Not a soul in it could speak French. It was with the greatest difficulty that Mr. Richards could make it understood that it was of importance that he should push on by the very first diligence. After a great deal of talking, he felt so little sure of any one in Spain thinking any thing of enough moment to be in a hurry about it, even if he had quite made his meaning clear, that he said it was better worth his while to sit up and make sure of the first diligence in the morning, than to go to bed for the few hours now left of the night.

The French had told us that in Spain we should be looked upon as people devoid of reason if we seemed to look for dinner as a matter of course, so we did not dare to speak of supper, even among ourselves, but threw ourselves on the pity of the people of the inn, who brought us cups of chocolate made in the Spanish manner. Strangers do not like it at first, but soon become used to it. The chocolate has just enough water stirred into it to make it a wet paste. They bring you strips of toasted bread to eat with it. It has this great merit that, in a country where you often have to skirmish before you can get anything to eat, it can almost always be had, and stands instead of both meat and drink.

My mistress and I went to our beds in the same room, leaving my master sitting by the brazier in the kitchen. Our room smelt very strongly of apples which were stored close by, and we agreed that our beds must be stuffed with them also; they were so lumpy. We were tired enough to sleep soundly, while my master worked at his little books, getting by heart whole dialogues in Spanish, or walked up and down to stretch his legs, each time he heard the watchman make his rounds, crying the hour of the night. Mr. Richards called us in time. All he could procure for us was more chocolate. We were in good heart when we found that, once on the road, we seemed to leave the snow behind us. As we drew nearer to Bilbao, we came into the rain and

the temperature of Bayonne; but on reaching that town we were pelted by the showers of Nantes. I thought that, even at Nantes, I had never seen such heavy rain as fell that day and night at Bilbao. The town seemed set in order against it; the houses being built with projecting eaves, nearly meeting, over streets so narrow that carts were not allowed to enter a great many of them.

It was Christmas-Eve, and we gave up some of our sleep, and some of the comfort of dry clothing to go round to the churches, expecting that there would be fine music at the night-services. Surely there was a great concourse of all sorts of people, and of all manner of musical instruments. There may have been "cornets, flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries, and dulcimers," for aught I can tell, for there were things, giving forth sounds, for which I knew no names; I know there were clarionets, violins, and violoncellos. It was like what one might have heard in some very much out-of the-way country-church in England, in my young days, or like the five fiddles at the Methodist meeting-house in a small English town; but there was a very great deal more of it. I began to see that there were ways and ways in my own church. There was no English decorum, nor French order here. The people seemed cast about the church as if shot out of some machine. Many were on their knees, but more were squatting on the

floor. Now, benches and Christians seem to have some connexion with each other, and rush-bottomed chairs and Christians some connexion also, but I thought I had come among Turks when I saw this practice. If they get it from the Moors, as I am told, the sooner they leave it to them the better; especially if they spit on the church floors, as they do in most parts of France. It was too dark for me to judge, but I should think it still more likely that they spat on church floors in Spain than in France by the sight I saw on going into a kind of porch outside. Some priests were walking up and down in great felt hats sticking out in front and behind, more like sou'westers than anything else. All were smoking. They seemed to take a cigar and a service by turns. As one came to the end of his cigar, he would enter the church, and soon we had another come out, who at once lighted his tobacco.

On going back to our inn, we held a little parley. Mr. Richards urged my mistress to stay where she was, and allow him to push on to Santander alone. Go he must, before daylight; but he thought it would be well for her to remain. He had fears that the snow we had found among the Pyrenees might extend to the great hills lying between Bilbao and Santander. Go we would too, however, for I had my little part in it. So, with heavy rain still falling, we left Bilbao in the diligence. As the day dawned, and we called to mind that it was

Christmas, and thought of how they were all spending it in England, and even at Nantes, our situation looked more dreary. My mistress grumbled gently at the guide-books, and asked if this were, indeed, the "fair and fertile Biscay, that land, blessed of heaven, which, whoso sees would see again: that country of hill and dale, of mountains rich in mines, and of meadows and cornfields yielding two crops in the year; of chestnut-woods and apple-orchards," &c., &c.

"Go on," said my master (for she read this with a little ridicule), "and you will find that, nevertheless, it has long winters, and is rainier than Devonshire." Here, on looking out, we saw snow, and my master, shaking his head, said, "Oh, wilful women! who would leave an inn where French was spoken, and where you had French cooking! Now, if you are snowed up to-day, don't blame me." Snowed up we were that day, but not before nightfall. By that time, my mistress and I were rather glad than otherwise to have it settled for us that we should not, could not, reach Santander that evening. It was such weary work, trying for hours to conceal our fears from each other as we watched the snow falling, and found our mules increased at almost every stage, and yet scarcely able to drag us through the drifts, and no one about us even daring to hazard a guess as to when or whether we should arrive at Santander. In the midst of it all, it did seem a monstrous

thing, that on reaching the frontier, between the lordship of Biscay and the Asturias (that is between one Spanish province and another), we should find another custom-house, as strict as if it were facing France. So it was. All the passengers were obliged to quit the diligence, and choose between standing in the deep snow, or wading through it into the odious shelter of a little custom-house, no better than a wooden hut, while another set of dirty hands tumbled over all their clothes, and soiled their passports. These papers were read, and compared with those who carried them, with as much caution and keenness as if Biscay were in full revolt against the crown. I forget whether Mr. Richards had to pay for being thus plagued, but it is quite safe to assume that he had.

CHAPTER XXII.

You will not find on any common map the name of the little pothouse, at the meeting of cross roads, where our diligence drew up, because it could go no further. Still it had a name, which was long and well-sounding in Spanish, though my master said that in English it only meant "The Nokes." It was just a place for changing horses or mules, and one or two foot-passengers, or a horseman not over-particular, might find rough lodging in it at a pinch. People thronged to the door, on our halting, with more appearance of interest than is usual with landlords or their hangers-on in Spain. We soon found that it was fellow-feeling that brought them to look at us. They were the passengers of another great diligence, which had halted there some hours earlier, for our own reason—it could go no further. Two or three of them asked if ours was the diligence from Burgos. On my master replying, in French, that we came from Bilbao, a young man stepped briskly up to us, and, taking his cigar from his mouth, expressed his

delight on hearing the French language, or, as he called it, "the accents of civilisation." My master was no less pleased, and said warmly that, next to an Englishman, he liked best of all to meet a Frenchman, when in a foreign country. The young fellow bowed, and exclaimed, "Then I shall no longer be in desolation as I was this instant, with no companion but my cigar; for, though there is another Frenchman in this barrack, he is but such as he is. And madame speaks French? and speaks it perfectly well! Madame asks if there are persons of her sex in this so-called inn? Yes, there are several such persons. There is one lady, who speaks French, a Spaniard, the wife of a merchant at Santander. She is very respectable, and will be charmed to find a companion in madame. We have got into it for some days, as it appears, and I advise monsieur to be quick in making such arrangements as are possible for the comfort of madame, and of mademoiselle her domestic, before the diligence from Burgos, which is expected from one quarter of an hour to another, brings a fresh crowd to this already overcrowded hovel. Madame, besides, should not stand in the snow. Not that way," for, as by instinct, we were turning to the stable-door, "it is true that madame will there find the back-stair of our hotel, a ladder of the roughest, by which one can mount to the reception-rooms, but it will be more commodious for madame to ascend our principal, our grand stone stairs."

So saying, he led the way up a narrow and steep flight of steps, just like what might lead up to an out-house in England. We followed, feeling the wall as we mounted. At the top, we found the entrance to the inn, which was all on one floor, the ground-floor being stables. We passed a kitchen, badly lighted by a single lamp, and entered the dining-room. Meanwhile the people, who had come down to look at us, had returned by the ladder, and were telling those who had not thought us worth the trouble of going down into the snow, how many of us there were, and what we seemed to be.

Our French friend, not finding the landlord in the room, said he would go and hunt him out, and his wife too; but first he would point out to madame the room given up to the ladies. That chamber he might not enter, or he would make her known to the Spanish lady. There were some there who would let him in readily enough, but not that lady. She was respectable, and even too respectable. She sat there saying her rosary, instead of helping him to pass the heavy hours.

Now my mistress and I had found time to cast a look on some bold créatures in the *salle à manger*, who did not seem to have the defect of over-respectability, so we were glad to find there was a lady who could be blamed for that; and she seemed equally glad to see us. The room was scarcely large enough for one French

bed, but, such as it was, all the women, of what class or in what number soever, were to be lodged in it. On hearing this, my master would not rest till he had made out for himself that nothing better could be done. The landlord was brought; he had an honest face, and proved, by showing us all the rooms on the floor, that he had but one more bedroom, his guest-chamber, containing a bedstead and a shake-down, which had been made over to the men, who were more in number than the women-passengers in these storm-stayed diligences. As for the ladies'-chamber, that was his own bedroom, given up by himself and his wife for the accommodation of his unexpected visitors.

Seeing there was no choice about it, nor chance of change for the better, we hoped that the supper would make up for the scanty provision for rest; the board for the bed. Our French friend gave us no encouragement to hope. "Would that I could cook!" said he; "I would risk the displeasure of that female Spaniard, who is called a cook; I would dance her into so good a humour that she should offer me the ladle. Ah! I will know how to cook before I trust myself another time in Spain; but, first of all, I never will enter Spain another time; I make myself that vow! But, would monsieur believe it, there is in that *salle à manger*, a cook, a French cook, a fat sausage of Arles, whom no hints, persuasions or entreaties of mine, can induce to mitigate his sufferings

and my own by putting forth his skill to improve our supper? I offered to beat the eggs (that is the limit of my knowledge) if he would but make an omelette; but he sits in apathy, and makes his game at cards by the side of the brazier. Let us see if the presence of these ladies will rouse him from so culpable a state of stupor."

We went into the dining-room. There, close to a brazier (in shape like the great brass milk-pans you may see in those English dairies in which they still make cheese), sat a heavy, flabby, dirty-looking Frenchman, whom our young friend made known to us with a flourish of words.

"This, monsieur and madame, is Monsieur Trophime Dufour; once cook to his bishop, under whose benediction he grew comely in size, as you behold him; afterwards, head of the kitchen to a general of division in Algiers; now, on his way to assume the same office in the palace of a Spanish duke, a *grand d'Espagne*. As monsieur does not cease to rise, he will be, one day, without doubt, chief in the kitchen of some king or emperor, if there be any left in ten years. My own wish would be that there might be none; but I check it for his sake, as republics do not know how to dine. Ah! would that he would give us some taste of his art; but he keeps me like Tantalus, with an empty plate, instead of a full cup, held to my hungry lips!"

The fat cook deigned a surly smile, and shuffled his dirty cards. His game was interrupted by the board, which served for his card-table, being needed by a waitress, who wished to lay our supper. We were hungry, but not even hunger could make us relish our food. At our first Spanish inn, our breakfast was unpalatable to the taste and unpleasing to the eye; here, it was disgusting to both. After a severe struggle with herself, my mistress was beaten; and owned that, even after a day's journey through the snow, she could swallow no more of that indescribable stew; a mixture in which you might guess there was goat's-flesh, and could be too sure there was rancid oil and garlic. My master urged her to try again; telling her to take some wine to help it down; although our French friend said that the apple was the father, and the grape the mother of the wine on the table. So it seemed; for it was hard to say whether it was cydrous wine, or vinous cyder. M. Armand Lemâitre (for that was his name) procured us some chocolate—that stop-gap of Spain—deploring all the while that his erring parents had not taught him how to cook, and shooting little darts at the insensible Trophime Dufour. "Ah, Mary," said my master, "what some of us would give for Ernest, now! Your mistress and I, for instance; you, of course, would as soon he were away!" "I should not mind having him here just to cook, sir," said I. "If that girl with the long tails

of red hair would let me, I would cook myself." "And I, too, will cook to-morrow!" cried M. Armand. "The art will reveal itself to me in my sleep of this night! Men have become poets of a sudden under the influence of fair ladies; why not cooks? To-morrow morning I will rise a cook!"

M. Armand drank his thin wine, and toiled to eat his heavy maize-bread with such gay good humour that we laughed if we did not eat. When all had supped, the board and tressels which propped it were put into a corner of the room. One Spaniard picked up a guitar, and played a waltz, and all the rest chose partners and began dancing. M. Armand, after vain entreaty that my mistress would dance with him, or that I would, went in search of the red-haired cook, who, he told us, was the best waltzer in the inn. She quickly left her washing up (if she ever did wash up), to twirl about the room with him. I was surprised to see how much better the Spaniards danced than people of the same class in France. Next they changed partners, and danced the Fandango. I had seen nothing of the kind before, and was rather shocked. The Spanish lady, who seemed to creep away from M. Armand—who pressed her to dance—and up to us, begged my mistress not to judge this famous Spanish dance by what she saw in this inn. She whispered that it was more, less, or not at all coarse, according to the class and manners of the dancers. We

could see, without a hint from her, that, beside herself, there was no Spaniard in our inn, of good education or breeding. The men seemed to be little traders, or bagmen, and the women nondescripts.

My mistress, this lady and myself, withdrew early; but we might as well have stayed where we were, for we could not settle to sleep till the others came. That guitar went on for long; at least, so it seemed to us who were weary; but in point of fact, the rest, being tired also, gave up dancing earlier than on any other night during our detention. At last, the whole party sorted themselves for sleeping, somehow. My mistress shared the bed with the Spanish lady; I, a mattrass on the floor with a showy woman whose style of dancing had alarmed me. My master and the two Frenchmen agreed, among themselves, that they should prefer sleeping on the table in the dining-room (which was pretty clean for a Spanish table) to sharing a bedroom or bed with the Spaniards (not that I think that cook from Arles needed to be so particular). So they brought back the board and tressels, and made themselves as warm and easy a couch as they could with great coats and wrappers. Their door was opposite ours, and long after they lay down we could hear singing. This was M. Armand Lemaître, "soothing,"—as he was pleased to call it—"his companions in misery to sleep by chanting vespers;" ending with a grand invocation to the tenth

Muse (for there must, he said, be a Muse of cooking) to inspire him in his slumbers, which sounded very like something out of an opera, mixed up, I am afraid, with fragments from the Latin service.

CHAPTER XXIII.

We had gone to bed in good hope that, during the night, our storm of snow might turn to rain, and be followed by a thaw; but, when morning came, we found that the snow had kept falling the whole night through, and was still falling, though not heavily. It was a "feeding storm," so that our chance of getting on to Santander seemed much less than it had been the day before. On going into the dining-room, we found my master conferring with the landlord, through the aid of M. Lemaître, who spoke Spanish fast enough, and threw in a little of his Lyceum Latin when at a loss for a word. Mr. Richards admitted, very unwillingly, that we must stay where we were; lose, at least, this day. What he wanted to learn was, how long so severe a storm was likely to last in that part of the country. The poor landlord, who was at his wit's end to find food for such a party of unexpected guests, gave him civil answers, but not much precise information. "We shall get no more from him," said M. Armand, "his brain

labours to find us a dinner. He is going to kill his oldest goat, and serve it after the manner of the patriarchs, from the knife to the spit. Also, he means to knock down that old cock that sung matins so much too early. In the meantime let us take some chocolate." We asked for bread, besides. There seemed to be plenty of it, but it was so bad as to check appetite.

What with M. Armand's chanting, and that cock's crowing, my master had had but a short night's sleep. Since dawn, he and M. Armand had talked themselves into a very fair acquaintance. M. Armand had been told what was the object of our journey, and had given all the advice and information in his power. He knew a little of Mr. Dennis, whom he described as *un homme sérieux*, but quite a *bonhomme* notwithstanding. Dennis was the man to help Mr. Richards to dispose of the timber should he ever wrench it from the grasp of the Spaniards. M. Armand thought he would have a hard fight for it with the men of Santander, who were real Normans, and worse. "The Norman passion for lawsuits rose to fury in the men of Santander. For example, there were two brothers, who traded in the Pyrenees, and were often to be met on the market of Santander, near which town both were now living. They had been at law for years about a bit of land, claimed by each of them. They had not seen each other for long and long, when they met in the street,

just at the time there was a lull in the lawsuit. "Why, José," says the elder, "What a time it is since I have seen you! and how is it I have heard nothing lately of our lawsuit? Why have you stayed the proceedings?" "For the simple reason that I have no more money," replied the younger brother. "Oh, if that's the case, the suit shall not be stopped for want of money. I'll lend you the money to carry it on." The younger hardly knew what to say to this surprising offer; but the other so pressed him that he agreed to it. The money was lent, and the suit is going on now."

M. Armand went on to say that, if the Santander railway, which, at present, had an existence on paper only, should ever be made, Dennis was pretty sure to be employed on it. He did not know where Dennis was at this moment. He himself was an engineer, but not of railways. He had been in the Spanish service as engineer of construction for roads and bridges. He was now on his way home; dismissed in favour of native talent. "It was one of the little ways of Spain. Spaniards got all they could out of your brains; your ideas, your plans (if they could), and, above all, your toil (for they hated labour more than the seven deadly sins), then, all at once, they found out that they were encouraging the vile foreigner (the foul names they give us French are unworthy of my mouth)! at the expense of their Spanish engineers, builders, and so

forth, so, some fine day, they brought out a few bishops to bless your bridge, or the engine of your steamboat, put in the newspapers that a mass should be said for those who went across it first, or made the trial-trip, and turned off all the English or French, from engineers down to *messieurs les navvies*. They would have done it to Dennis long ago, but he hedged by working for English companies. What matter? I am young, I am a bachelor. The world has other roads to make, and is far from having built all its bridges!"

I now set about making our poor bedroom as comfortable and tidy as was in my power. Nothing could be done to the floor, which was crusted with the dirt of scores of years, but I did manage to clean the inside of that one pane of glass which was our sole window. They who built the house had to think of keeping out heat as well as cold. Light was a lesser matter. Even the kitchen had but a glimmer of daylight through a single pane, and a rude lamp, fed with fat, was burnt in it all day long.

The Spanish lady watched me rubbing that pane with great surprise, not unmixed with approval. The other women looked on from their seats on the floor with pure and simple wonder, which was increased to stupor on my proceeding to dust the scanty furniture. It would have been an unpleasant, but very praiseworthy, labour to have tubbed them. Tubs, and even basins,

were, however, out of the question there. They brought us one of the brown earthen pipkins which stood simmering on the kitchen-stove, and some yellow and greasy hot water in a great copper saucepan, with a handle as long as that of a warming-pan. This, I should say, was on my mistress asking for it through the Spanish lady, and no one but that lady herself seemed to have any notion of why it was wanted. You hear of vagrants to whom a bath is one of the law's worst terrors. I do think our demands for water, and the skilled movements of my duster, had some kindred effect on those female Spaniards. They whispered among themselves. They eyed my mistress and me as if we were "uncanny," and they plainly shrunk from keeping us company from that time forth. The air of the room was the purer for it.

I too soon came to the end of the task I had set myself. It fretted me to see how very little I could do for the comfort of my mistress in that weary place. We had silently agreed to grumble at nothing, but, I dare say, each of us said to herself many times in an hour, "oh, how silly I was to come to Spain at such a season of the year."

When I went back to the *sala*, the guitar, which had been tinkling since there was daylight, was laid down, the packs of cards were thrown down; some folks had crowded to the windows, others gone down the stone-

stairs to get a sight of the Burgos diligence which had just toiled up to our inn. It was like our own arrival. There, below, stood my master and M. Armand, while the cook from Arles did not move from his seat by the brazier. Out of the diligence came the same number of people, looking far more tired than we had done, having gone through much greater struggles and hardships. They brought up our number from about a dozen to over twenty. There were women among them too.

Stop! My master presses to the front, holding out his hand. I have a thumping of the heart, and a singing in my ears. I know, somehow, whom I am to see before my eyes behold him.

When my mistress, some seconds later, cries "I do believe it is Ernest Trévorec!" I answer, "I almost think you are right, Ma'am."

"Dear me! how very odd he should come here."

"Not so odd, Ma'am, as that we should be here ourselves," say I, just by way of keeping on talking.

"I should be glad, very glad indeed, to have him with us in this strange place, if he had not behaved so very badly to you, Mary. Poor girl, it is very awkward for you. You had better go to the bedroom, and try to compose yourself before the young man comes up."

Now the minute I had had a good look at Ernest's open face, it had come over me that there could be

nothing wrong about him. He could clear up the mystery of those letters, I felt very sure. So I said, "I think Ma'am, if you please, that I will stay where I am; I must meet him, you know, and the sooner the better."

"Well, perhaps you are right;—but are you sure, Mary, that you are not trying to do too much? What a time your master stands in that snow? I should not take so much notice of young Trévoreç—but men never will blame men."

I must say that it *was* provoking of my master to stay down there such a time. I make no doubt that he discussed where Ernest came from, whither he was going, and wherefore; where was Mr. Dennis, and in what state of health; the condition of the roads, and prospects of the weather, before he aimed at appeasing our curiosity. When he did come upstairs, he told us that Ernest also was on his way to Santander—sent by Mr. Dennis on business connected with the projected railway: sent a little sooner by Dennis, who very kindly thought he might be of use in the matter of the timbership.

"So now I could push on, if the roads would allow, and leave you here with so good a squire of ladies as Ernest. And now, Anne, you may begin your sighing. It is all as I said: the young fellow knows no more of those letters than I do; not so much, for I have seen

them, and he never did. The first thing he asked was if Madame was here, and Mademoiselle Marie? 'Both are here,' said I; 'but how do you stand for meeting Mary?' He was in a great fright, thinking that I meant Mary was either married, or had given him the go-by. Here he comes. Now, Mary, you will have plenty of time to make it all out from him. Don't tease him more than will just keep up your health and spirits."

Any one who has followed my fortunes must have seen that never was there a poor young woman so cheated of all proper courtship as myself. Single women, I have heard it said, "miss the romance of life;" I am sure that I missed the romance of courtship. If it had not been for the kind woman who put those letters together, I should not have had one dear morsel of misunderstanding, nor one delightful bit of difficulty, until I came to the very prosy plague of getting my papers into order for my civil marriage. What fine chances, what good "situations," were utterly wasted, were wholly marred, by my master's blunt, off-hand way of "having it out," as he called it, with Ernest; and putting him right with me before he fully understood that he was wrong. No one can ever make up to me for what did not happen. Think of meeting Ernest in so sudden a manner, in so strange a place, land-bound on our journey, barred indoors by the snow, thrown together perforce, but always in the sigh of strangers.

He might have rushed forward to throw himself at my feet (this is a figure of speech for offering to shake hands); I might have waved him off, and withdrawn, with dignity, to my chamber, which I should not have quitted thenceforward except to take the sustenance needful to maintain life. Ernest might have embodied many a charming sentiment in the most dainty little dishes, cooked *à mon intention.* I might have seemed not even to know they were on the table, and have sternly kept to fried bread and chocolate, withdrawing, so soon as the repast was over, without giving one glance at his pale face, and the untasted food upon his plate. I might have shunned all meetings with him, and yet they might always have been happening. Lured by a premature report of a great thaw, I might have gone down the stable-ladder to see for myself if the news were true; at the foot I might have found Ernest ready to help me with his hand. As I could not go up the ladder again with much speed or dignity, I might have been on the verge of entering into explanations; which would, of course, have been interrupted, and matters left worse than they were. I might have flirted with the cook from Arles, and as nearly flirted with M. Armand as my station would allow (both were, in truth, obliging enough to give me the chance); I might have danced with every dirty Spaniard in the inn; in short, there is no telling how many games at

cross-purposes might not have been played. It all might have been spun out so as to last the length of our stay at that inn; and our full explanation been made to coincide with a general thaw, and the opening of the highways. My supposed causes of offence and the snowdrifts might have melted away at the same time. I have had my losses, and this is among them. I was very glad to learn that Ernest was all right; still I could have teased him a little before owning him to be so; but there stood my master and mistress, and I had no help for it, but must smile on him, and give him my hand to shake, which he knew enough of English manners to exact, though among all those foreigners it was equal to making known our engagement.

In a few minutes we were cooking merrily in the kitchen. Ernest knew, without being told, that there could be nothing in that inn fit to set before my mistress. Under the safe conduct of M. Armand, who warmly encouraged any plans for improving our fare, we entered that dusky chamber, which was, perhaps, the better for being ill-lighted. The dim lamp, the single pane, made the dirt pass for part of the general darkness. A wide and deep arch was turned in the wall, as in old English farmhouses, so that you could sit on all sides of the kitchen-range of two or three little stoves of brick, built into a kind of dresser (M. Armand called it an *autel*, and it was not unlike one). On

this were set the brown pipkins, and by it sat the red-haired cook whom my master called "Maritornes," peeling onions. How good-natured it was of M. Armand to get her out of the way! He whisked her off to the *sala*, called on a sort of smuggler to play the guitar, which lay on the table ready for any one to pick up, and waltzed with her till he was tired out.

Meanwhile, Ernest was all for joy and gladness, and for settling who could have written those letters, which I happened to have in my pocket, having refreshed my spirits by looking at them that very morning.

"Never mind who wrote them," said I, "so long as you did not. Let us cook now, and explain afterwards; we have the time on our hands here. I now believe it to have been that Aileen. She once played Biddy such a trick."

"How could you suppose I spelt so badly?" said Ernest.

"All your French spelling looks bad to me. Besides, I have heard Mr. Lawson say, never was a nation that spelt so ill. I think he made out that you took after the ancient Romans in that as in other matters."

"The masters of the world," said Ernest; who would have been nettled but for that soothing comparison.

"Ah! my children, how does all that go on?" said M. Armand, coming in and dropping on a three-legged stool. "Behold me worn out by that girl who never

tires! She could dance down three men or more, that cook, that Mariquita!"

"Mariquita!" said Ernest (trying to clean her frying-pan, which was sorely in need of it); "it is the Spanish for 'Mariette,' but that rather coarse, red girl only serves as a foil to an amiable person to whom a fond fancy loves to appropriate that little name."

"None of your compliments," said I, sharply, in English, for I saw a knowing twinkle of M. Armand's eye; "think of how you are to garnish your dishes, not me."

"Ah! I should be pleased to have some water-cress to garnish a little dish which I propose to do myself the honour to offer to Madame Richards. Here, Mariette, is my portmanteau, wilt thou unpack it? Thou wilt find therein a portion of a pie of hare, of my own making, some galantine of veal, and half a cold fowl. If I had but some cress to marry unto that fowl, it would be worthy the attention of Madame."

"The cresses may be had, my friend," said M. Armand, "I picked some yesterday up the course of a little mill-stream hard by. I will try again when I have unfatigued myself from dancing. The Muse of cookery, whom I invoked last night with a fervour without parallel, did not appear to notice me at the time; but this morning she sends you to us, you, our best of benefactors. It may be, she will yet reveal herself to me. Seated on this tripod, I await her whispers."

She would have nothing to say to him, I suppose, for at last he was rested, and went to seek water-cresses, leaving us what he called his blessing. "Be happy oh my children. Cook and court! Court and cook! (*Faites la Cuisine! Faites l'Amour!*) How many times have I, too, been in love! I am not an egotist, I know my duty to humanity. I go away. Make me one at your wedding as my recompense! If not, the sentiment of humanity will, of itself, be my sufficient reward!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE guitar went on tinkling in the *sala*, and the cook went on dancing. Where all this time was her mistress? Shaking up the shakedowns with the other girl, the waitress, Pilar. It was not much like my kitchen at Nantes; but Ernest was there and I, and we were young, and in joyous spirits. It was all I could do to keep myself from making too much of Ernest. "My amiable Mariette," said he, "you never before suffered me to feel myself so welcome!" "You never before were so welcome! Any one who could cook would be welcome here, let alone a young man who travels with made dishes in his carpet-bag. I should have thought gluttony was one of your great sins, if I had heard of such a thing before I had seen this country for myself; now I call it prudent foresight."

It was a pleasure to have dishes, looking good, and tasting better still, to set before my master and mistress. Mrs. Richards hinted that she scarcely liked to have nice things apart from the others at table. "Madame is very good," said Ernest, "but these are only Spaniards.

'They will relish their own horrors of national dishes." "Come, Madame," said my master, "Ernest gives the feast. Let us thank him, and have no scruples. Sit down, Mary." "If Madame would be kind enough to ask the gentleman who gave himself the trouble to go in search of this cress?" said Ernest. "He is a Frenchman. He is amiable! It would be hard to leave him to eat like those Spaniards!"

The Spaniards did not seem to envy us at all. They ate their strange viands, and drank their thin, dark wine with much appearance of enjoyment. The flabby cook from Arles cast uneasy looks at Ernest, who waited on our little party, with eyes beaming as if he were thinking that he, and all things were now in their right places. No Frenchman likes another to be the hero of the hour. M. Armand got over his having, for a moment, to give place to the new comer, by good-naturedly taking Ernest into his favour and protection. The cook seemed to think his proper course was to assert himself. For the first time, we heard him talk a good deal. It was all about the high wages he had had, and the higher still he hoped to attain. He seemed to know the salary of every great man's cook in Europe, and scarcely to think that any of them had enough. There were few bounds to what that man would have asked where he dared. He only spoke of chiefs. Those below them, were in his language, "mere trimmers of

cutlets," "watchers of the roast," or "compilers from other men's recipes."

"It is well, *mon cher*," said M. Armand, picking him up in a pause, "it is pretty to hear you talk of your *grandes sauces*, your *sauces mères;* like that, you added sharpness to my hunger, yesterday, and would not stir a finger to allay it. It seems to me that you are only a theorist. A true artist could not have helped cooking. Speak to me no more of your art. I am of those who only believe in what they touch, see, and taste. Here is a fine fellow in whose art I do believe, because the proofs are on my plate."

"I keep my skill for my employers," said M. Trophíme, sulking, "as you keep your science, I presume. I am, besides, a chief of the kitchen, and do not cook on journies, or without a proper staff, and proper implements."

Two Frenchmen can so soon get up a quarrel. M. Armand smiled and sneered.

"Ah, you are like my Gallician; you stand on your dignity. Does M. Richards know the Gallicians? The Auvergnese of Spain? They are robust like these Basques, but more stupid and boorish. They can only earn a franc a day (women's wages), where the Biscayan, almost equal to your navvies, gains his three francs. I had a gang of them, men and women, employed on a road I was making. It is the custom of

the province for the men to do the lighter work. My men filled baskets with earth, and the women carried and emptied them. I was among them, looking on while they worked, when I saw a woman standing idle, though a full basket was at her feet.

"Why are you doing nothing?"

"I am waiting," she replied, "until some other woman comes near, who will help me to lift this basket to my head."

"Help this woman," said I to the nearest man.

He looked at me, but did not speak, nor move.

"Help this woman with her basket," I repeated.

He slowly laid down his shovel, raised the basket to the woman's head; then stooped to pick up his jacket, threw it across his shoulder, and walked away, giving me another grave and steady look before he went, and one word in Spanish, "good-bye." I had wounded his honour and his pride of place, by asking him to do woman's work. That man never came back to my gang. He even left the province where he had been disgraced, and went to Madrid, where I found him a hewer of wood, a carrier of water, treated as a human beast of burden, less thought of than a mule, but taking rebuff and drudgery as a matter of course when out of his own province.

"And could you teach the others no better?" asked my mistress.

"No, not even by lifting loads myself for the women. I gave it up in disgust. Some of the fellows were jealous, for these poor women are pretty until other women are just beginning to be pretty (they are so early worn into ugliness by hard work in the sun); besides, the poorest and most ignorant Spaniard thinks he needs not to learn from any foreigner. Ah, why did you fight against us for them!"

"We fought our own battle on their soil," said my master. "Nations are never grateful, you know. The lower classes seem to have odd notions of the English, if a man here, from whom I took a Spanish lesson this morning, be a fair sample. He asked me (I begin to make out what they say, and the lady at the other end of the table helped me), "if my surname was not 'Vellinton.' He seemed to think 'Vellinton' the name of a clan, or a tribe, or, perhaps, of all the English."

The cook from Arles took no notice at the time of the parable aimed at him by M. Armand, but it was not wholly without effect. Before dinner, he did, actually, so far bestir himself, as to seek some more water-cress by the mill-stream, and dress it as a salad. This green stuff was good for the health of all, and kept up the spirits of the Frenchmen. M. Trophime was an unpleasant person; selfish (and my master said), very coarse; having nothing to talk of but the high wages got by good cooks, and the great admiration felt for

himself by the women of all countries. Of course he had held far higher places than Ernest had ever had a chance of approaching, but Ernest's self-love was too elastic not to spring up again in full force whatever attempts M. Trophime might make to crush it. He might vaunt himself to be a chief. Ernest told me that he had not "the conscience of his art." "He might draw a large salary, but he would never watch over the interests, and the health of his employers; to whom a true artist should consecrate his time, his intelligence, and serve, as it were, with loyalty and devotion." He might dwell on his grand *pièces montées*, but Ernest had his suspicions that he was "a mere charlatan of the kitchen, dabbling," (he dared say), "in *roux* and *coulis au caramel*, which belonged to the quackery and poison of modern cookery; nay, from what he had heard him let drop, even capable of the debasing vulgarity of introducing moulded butter into his compositions."

So Ernest held his own, and M. Armand helped him, and M. Trophime felt the force of two against him with an English reserve behind; and fell back into silence and card-playing, and a little courtship of the cook, Mariquita. It seems hard for one Frenchman to see another making love, and not have the air of doing the same. I felt for M. Armand, whose little gallantries were almost repulsed by the Spanish lady, and taken by my mistress as a matter of course; the common

civility to which she had all her life been accustomed. He fared no better when he came down to the waitress, Maria del Pilar, whom they called Pilar for short. This just means Pillar; but M. Armand called her "Colonne," which was, he said, better sounding, and more poetical. Colonne, who was tall and fair, with light-brown hair (for there are plenty of people with light complexions in Biscay), was a steady girl, who would dance as much as he liked, but would not flirt like that cook, like all the rest.

The new comers by the last diligence, both men and women, were of the same stamp as those we found in the inn. They drew together, playing at cards, all day long. When it was night to us, it seemed none to them. They were all dancing long after we were in bed; but we were too tired to be much disturbed. That night, only one or two of the women appeared in our chamber; the others had moved their mattrasses, and slunk away, we knew not whither.

Next morning, my mistress said she was fearful that these poor women, who were in as bad a case as ourselves, had left the only place where they could find any comfort lest they should crowd us. "Don't even ask after them," said my master, rather gruffly. "You had better concern yourself about the muleteers, who, you may observe, never come to our table, and, I suppose, sleep by their mules down below."

M. Armand, who was laughing quite out, said,

"Excuse me, madame, I smile to hear you pity those female Spaniards. The true case is, you are by far too respectable for them. They are under constraint when with you. That is all. Why trouble yourself where they lodge? In any corner; in all the corners. We were in our first sleep on the table-top last night, when some of them and my dancing cook, burst into this *sala*, dressed in men's clothes, dragged off our wrappers, and defied us to get up and dance. As we were not hatched yesterday, we left them under a rattling shot of pleasantries, that men should be tired and not have the spirit to dance when women were willing. They had pulled the other men out of their beds before coming to us: so we slipped into their places. It was some pleasure to hear the landlady and her maid, the virtuous Colonne, scatter them to all corners, with a fire of foul names, strictly merited, I do not doubt. They must know their own countryfolks better than we do!"

We never again cared to ask where those females went. They kept clear of our room. Elsewhere, we saw even too much of them. Pretty nearly all I ever knew the landlady do was to go about the house with Pilar (those two, I do believe, were modest women), breaking up their parties with the men, and driving them back to the public room. "'*Cosas de España!*' these were the things of Spain," said M. Armand. "The grossness of France would be decency in Spain," added

Ernest. Both, being Frenchmen, were unfair to Spaniards. I certainly never did see such morals and manners in all my days before that journey or since; but then all before and since have been spent in smooth and ordered tracks of daily use and wont. It may be that if three coach-loads of people of a low class had been snowed up at a little post-house in the Welsh mountains, or the Vosges, with nothing in the world to do, and no one to check them, such of their betters as were there being strangers, and speaking languages unknown to them, they might not have behaved much better than did the people at this inn.

We cooked again, and, I suppose, courted a little besides. I soon found that I need not be at all afraid of Mariquita, who was very lazy, except when dancing, and glad enough to find any one so silly as to do her work. There was now some comfort at our meals, and plenty of mirth. Since Ernest was come, Mrs. Richards said she felt as much at ease as she could be in such a case. M. Armand had no longer a care, unless it were that his own cigars were coming to an end. "It still snowed, did it? Truly, he did not concern himself to ask! Let it snow! my dear" (this was to my master), "Why let that timber-ship float about in your fancy—drift and drive upon your brain? If it did not founder at the first, it will not sink now. They never do; the water gets among the logs and keeps it all

afloat. They have seized it long ago, or never will. Besides, to begin at the beginning, you are not at all sure that it is yours. How very little you have to go upon!"

"Very little, indeed," said my master. "That I tell myself daily; nothing more than two letters which might be letters of our ship's name, and that no other timber-ship of such a size was missing at the time. Against me is the captain; take his word for what it is worth. It was his interest to make out that he did not leave till she was sinking, and he fancied that it was the best thing he could do for every one but the underwriters to make her out a total wreck. I admit I have not much firm footing, but I cannot be easy till I push on. This is the third day I am kept half-way to Santander. Every hour's delay risks the interests of my wife's brother. If there were but an open road, I could now leave my wife with less uneasiness. I can do Trévorec's business, and leave him (not unwilling), to attend her and her maid to Santander when the diligence can move."

"Meantime it snows," said M. Armand, "and our landlord, whom I have questioned on your behalf, says that though there is but a trifling increase in the snow's depth, you have not a chance for to-day."

"I know it only too well."

So my master grew more restless, and chafed the

more after Ernest's coming, instead of being easier like some of us. He plied the landlord with questions, and worked at his Spanish in a corner of the *sala*. Towards afternoon, he had a glimpse or two of hope. One or two muleteers, who had made their way down bridle-paths among the hills, stopped to drink. M. Armand and Ernest collected from each what he could tell of the weather and the roads. It was not much they could gather, nor was it very encouraging, but Mr. Richards thought, if they could make their way, he might; and, though he said nothing to my mistress, he began to bargain with the landlord for mules and a guide, that he might leave so soon as a track was open. M. Armand and Ernest were charged not to say a word of this to us. Both thought it hazardous, and were relieved when the landlord declined to have anything to do with it until the snow had ceased falling.

CHAPTER XXV.

THROUGH that third day and night the snow fell softly, but next morning there were long pauses between showers, and, at times, there was sunshine, drawing us from the side of our braziers into the open air. Some stores were needed for use which lay in an outhouse, so blocked up that the snow must be cleared away before the door could be opened. A man brought a cart and yoke of oxen from a neighbour on the hills. It was one of those carts, so common in Spain, with no springs, a wooden axle, and solid wheels, cut out of a single block of wood. It was very cumbrous at any time, but, when filled with snow, the oxen could scarcely move it at all, much less drag it from the yard. The driver, who carried a long stick with a prong of iron at the end, made several thrusts at the flanks of the poor beasts. Each time they were goaded, they made a fruitless struggle to move the cart. A Frenchman's cries and face-makings are droll enough in such a case, but that Spaniard outdid the French. He coaxed his oxen, he begged them, he

implored them to put forth their strength. Now speaking low in their ears with words of love, his goad laid back on his shoulder; now rushing back to thrust at them with rising fury. The oxen tried and failed, two or three times running. The driver seemed beside himself. He threw aside his goad (as a man who must take sterner measures), and going quite close up to their heads, said, in a low voice of desperation, "I'll tell you what it is, if you do not move on this time, I will spit in the face of the Most Holy Virgin!" The two Frenchmen burst into loud laughter; but, as it happened, the two oxen did move on. "The poor man threatened to commit the most awful sin he can think of," said my master, "and his very oxen shudder, and strain to stop him, and you two young fellows make a jest of it!"

"What a droll of a religion is the Spanish!" said M. Armand (who had translated the endearments, the entreaties, and the threats of the driver; "sparing us," he said, "the unutterable foulness of a Spanish peasant"). "What a droll of a religion! Is there a man in France who would have permitted himself to give others such an occasion for laughing? Monsieur thinks I am not much of a believer, so he does not much believe me! Would he be a believer, had he seen the outcome of such a system? Let me tell him a story told me on my way here, by a man who does believe, by a Spaniard, by a good Catholic, who fancied matters might

be mended, though he is not wild enough to think his own hands could do much to set them to rights. He is a very honest man, with whom I have had dealings which made it needful I should meet him before quitting the country. He could not see me on the day I fixed. This delay threw me into this storm, which has, however, caused me to make acquaintances of the most agreeable nature. My friend's excuse was, that he was obliged to attend the funeral of a sort of public character, a man much talked of as having made a large fortune in an odd manner. He had been a penniless boy, taken from the north of Spain to the south, by a trader and his wife, who took a fancy to him. Paquo was shrewd and docile. He kept his place and favour till he was grown up to manhood, and his mistress left a widow too rich to care to carry on her business. 'I shall want you no longer, Paquo,' said the old lady; 'but you have been a good boy, and my dear husband loved you. Tell me what I can do for you. I should like to give you some substantial proof of how highly you were thought of by your master and mistress?' You will think he asked the wealthy widow to marry him? An obvious, though stupid thing to do! Not he! Paquo said, modestly, 'Señora, all I wish is that you would give me an old image, which has been lying in the garret ever since I knew your house.' So said, so done. Paquo went home to his province, taking with him a

crumbling, worm-eaten, wooden image, which might be any saint you chose to call it; if it were not rather one of those Moors or giants which are borne on cars in the Easter-processions, thrown aside because it was too battered to be brought out. Paquo had never seen it treated with any respect. He had shared its garret, and might have cut it into chips unblamed, while his mistress was paying her respects to images of a newer cut, in smart clothing, freshly painted and gilt. The shrewd and patient boy! the great man! he saw what could be made of it. He had saved money. He hired a house, and set up a sort of shrine in a dark room, in which he placed his image. When kinsfolk and neighbours came to wish him joy of his return, he spread among them that his poor services had been even too highly paid by his most worthy mistress. She had given him a priceless reward, an image of the greatest antiquity, and famous powers of healing. He let them have a peep at it in his back parlour; and they told others, who came with little presents in their hands that they might coax him into letting them, too, have a peep. Peeps and presents; wishes supposed to be granted, and sicknesses cured after a visit to Paquo's parlour! You may figure to yourself how it all went on. The fame of the wonder-working image spread beyond that village, beyond that neighbourhood, beyond that province. The images of other provinces found a slight falling off in

their receipts, and grew a little jealous; how much more those within ten leagues of Paquo! The bishop was told of the pilgrims who came from all quarters. He was told that this had gone on for years, and that Paquo was growing rich on offerings of money, and plump and well-dressed on offerings in kind. He thought it worth while to make a special visit to Paquo, and to handle him with great caution. He suavely said, that the señor was surely not aware that so precious an object of piety ought not to be left to the keeping of a private person, in a private house. Rather should it be set in a worthy manner in some church to which all men might resort without let or hindrance. Paquo listened with respectful attention. He admitted that he had, in his ignorance, done wrong, in profiting by the gifts that flowed in. He now felt that to receive them had been, in a manner, to wrong and rob the clergy. To atone for it, he begged the bishop to permit him to build, at his own cost, a church worthy to contain what his greatness so truly called, 'this precious object of piety.' The bishop, who had counted that Paquo would not give up his income without giving him a great deal of trouble, was charmed to find matters settled without the show of a struggle. Paquo even thanked him for his fatherly rebuke. The bishop told him that he was a truly pious man, a credit to the diocese; so he told others, and so he even told himself. Next year, before the bishop came round on

his visitation, Paquo had a bit of his own land marked off as the site for his church. Its foundations were also laid—upon paper. The bishop approved of what was shown him; and how the money did come in after each of his visits! Next year, the bishop found a few feet of masonry, and a great litter of scaffolding-poles, and squared stones. The year after that, the work seemed at a stand-still, and the bishop was sorry for Paquo, who was so fretted by the delays of workmen. Delays without number may be made in building, if one does but give one's mind to the making them! One year there was a lack of workmen; another, no carts could be had to fetch stone or timber. At last it dawned on the bishop that Paquo never meant that church to be finished. He might hint, urge, and censure, but, for year upon year, there was but a very little bit more done to the church, and a very great deal more money taken at the house. Paquo managed to make a fortune, and die at a good old age, leaving the image still standing in his parlour, the gifts flowing in to his coffers, and the church half finished. My friend, coming from his funeral, told me this true story; and thought it safe, as I was a Frenchman, to let me know his loathing of a system under which such a rascal could prosper."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THAT afternoon there was an increase in the number of droppers-in. It was clear that some by-paths were open, if the highways were still impassable. While they drank, they were plied with questions; and when my master had gathered from them all they could tell, they had their dance, and rode away. Never was there such a place for dancing. I see the word comes in very often as I write. Dancing went on all day at that inn, and nearly all night too. It seemed as if every Spanish man or boy, girl or woman, could both dance well, and play the guitar. All the time we were there, horsemen and footmen who stopped to drink, stopped to dance also. Was Mariquita hired to dance as well as to cook? She never was blamed for leaving her pipkins. Perhaps she brought custom to the inn, by being in repute as a partner. She was in so much request that there was a jealous complaint that those Frenchmen tried to engross her. M. Armand (to tease the Spaniards, I think,) being mostly to be found waltzing with her in the kitchen, while Pilar played the guitar.

There is a story that, once upon a time, a Pope who meant to forbid the Fandango, ordered some Spaniards to dance it in his presence, that he might judge it with his own eyes before giving sentence. It ended in his leading out a Cardinal, and himself dancing it as high as David, followed by the rest of the Sacred College. Such sanction may excuse our party, when I confess that, on that third night, we all yielded to the Fandango. There was no power of sitting still left in one of us. My mistress led off with M. Armand. My master prevailed on the Spanish lady to dance a decorous Fandango with him, by way of teaching manners to those who needed checking, and I followed with Ernest. After this, we all danced pretty nearly as much as the rest. What else had we to do? Besides, it kept us warm. "Let us fall in with things as they are!" said Mr. Richards. "I think we shall never again see such doings. I am not sure though, for I have seen something like it in Ireland. Once at Killarney, when a crowded *table-d'hôte*-dinner was going on, up struck a fiddler outside, just as the waiters were changing our plates. Off ran every waiter, and fell to dancing. As we saw we should get nothing more to eat till they had had enough of it, we all ran after them, and struck in with the barefooted damsels of our inn. When we were tired—we and the waiters—we went back and ate the rest of our dinner, under the

severe gaze of a Dissenting minister, who had sate frowning at his empty plate all the while we were frisking."

On the next day there was still a little snow falling, but it seemed to be not so hard to procure supplies of food from the neighbouring farmhouses, and we had many droppers-in. Card-playing, dancing, cooking and courting as before. My master showed still greater signs of weariness and impatience. On the morrow (our fifth day at that inn) the snow had ceased. One or two horsemen, who halted to bait, were able to tell the depth of the snow lying upon this path and that. On what they said the landlord could base his plans; and, in the afternoon, Mr. Richards informed my mistress that, should the weather remain settled until the following morning, he had made terms with the landlord, who, with the help of a guide, would himself conduct him to Santander. It was hard to make out how far we were distant from Santander, as the landlord and the riders who were questioned, always reckoned not by miles, but by how long it would take their mules. We supposed ourselves to be about half way, but it would be a two days' journey in the present state of the roads—that is to say, the snowfall had multiplied the distance from Bilbao by three.

Mrs. Richards saw her husband was not to be holden back. The French and I were desired not to suggest

to her any of the hazards of the journey, and to do all we could to quiet her fears as they rose. We had all had time to see that our landlord was a worthy man. This checked the doubts that would otherwise have cropped up as to my master's trusting himself, with his money, in the hands of a couple of strangers. Mr. Richards paid our bill up to the sixth day before leaving. If we fared poorly, we were charged cheaply.

Though the cold was extreme next morning, every one rose at daybreak to see my master's departure. He left under the good wishes of every soul in the inn. Clean or dirty in morals, manners, or person, they all gained on our good will by the heartiness with which they bade him God speed. My master was surprised, and my mistress quite touched and tender to the Spaniards after that leave-taking.

The mountaineer, who was guide, went first, with his long pole, leading a spare mule which bore provender, provisions, my master's hat-box, with such clothes as it would hold, and some wrappers slung to the saddle. My master and the landlord followed him, mounted on mules. Soon were the three out of sight, my mistress left to doubts and fears, and M. Armand, Ernest and myself to make the best of things, and keep her spirits up; though even M. Armand owned that he thought Richard should not have run such risks. "But *que voulez-vous?* To be in danger is to feel alive! I could

wish I were with him, were it not going back into Spain!"

M. Armand half jested, half was jealous that the Spanish lady should seem so forlorn after my master's leaving. Poor lady! I do believe she thought that he took away with him the whole of the male respectability of the inn. She did not like the French. She seemed half afraid of M. Armand. He would have been what she chose, pleasant or gallant. She shrunk from him, he shrugged his shoulders, and sat by my mistress.

Though herself the wife of a merchant, that Spanish lady seemed to think that no business of your own, much less that of your neighbour, could be worth the encounter of such perils on a journey. Of course, my mistress had many and many a fear, so had I, in my degree, for I could make out from Ernest that the reason why the Spaniards "blessed themselves" (as we call it) so much oftener after my master left than before, was that they were talking him over, and made the "cross of astonishment" at any one of his age being so blameably hot-headed.

We spent a wearisome week. One day passed like another. We talked of my master, and wished we were with him; of the roads and the weather, the weather and the roads.

Early in the morning of the fourth day after Mr.

Richards left, our landlord came back, bringing a brief note for my mistress.

"I am safe and well, but weary. Landlord an honest fellow. Have had no time to seek any news of ship. Vexed that I should have spent more time in coming here than if I had gone from England to New York. They say here that you will not get off for another week at least.—Café Frances, Santander, New Year's Eve, 184—."

The landlord was no great talker, but it could be made out from him that the journey had been full of hazard, and that he and his fellow-guide had been amazed at the Englishman's power of endurance. "He was like one of ourselves." This is the highest praise a man of one country can concede to a man of another.

Every one in the inn had become more restless since my master was seen to go. It was who should show the most impatience to be gone. As the snow thawed, our spirits rose. No diligence came up to our inn from any side, before ours to Santander (which was the first of the three able to move), left at the end of a week from my master's starting. I fear that we were so glad to go that we scarcely were civil enough to seem sorry to leave M. Armand behind. He drew the most distressing pictures of what would be his misery when we left, but we were sure he would contrive to amuse himself. He had the knack of consoling himself

whatever might befall him. He is very happy now, I hear, somewhere on the Suez canal, and there is now a Madame Armand, for whom he has "ranged himself" (as they say in France), and with whom he keeps house very pleasantly, whenever he happens to be at home.

We thought of little on our journey, but of when we should reach Santander, how we should find Mr. Richards, and whether or not he had found his ship. For a great part of our way, snow was lying on the hills, and fell at times; but, as we drew near to Santander, we saw no trace of the snow except on the highest mountain-tops. The first sign of our approach to the town was, that when we were still some miles away from it, we heard an intolerable screeching. This was the creaking of solid cart-wheels. It lasted until we came up to the carts. The roads were so uneven, and the carts so clumsy, that as we drove down the hill into Santander, we passed those very carts we had heard at a considerable distance. They were several hundreds in number, all laden with flour, and dragged by a couple of oxen.

Santander has one of the finest harbours in Europe, and outside it lay that night the *Fleur de Marie*, while the houses were being hung with white as for a church festival, and the shipping dressed with flags in honour of our ship, which was to be brought in as a Spanish prize, in great triumph, on the morrow morning.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"HERE *you* are, and there *she* is!" were the first words of my master, whom we found waiting for us at the office of the diligence. "I have wanted you very badly, and I cannot tell you how badly I have wanted my portmanteau! I have been kept on the fret between the quay and the consulate, the coach-office and the post ever since I entered the town. As not a mail has come in from Paris, I knew your road was blocked, but I came to the office daily for the chance of meeting you. You are come into harbour, and my timber-ship outside it on the very same day. Ah! you both thought your inn a nest of queer birds; but now you are walking into a den of thieves. The only good thing about the place is that it is warm."

It was strange and pleasant to us who had come down from the wintry hills to find ourselves in the warmth of summer. As we passed through the streets we saw shutters closed to keep out the heat of a January sun, and ladies wearing black lace mantillas

and white kid gloves, were stepping slowly, warding off its rays with their fans. A soft shower was falling on the bay. We had left it snowing on the hills. We could see their white tops from the land-locked harbour, more sheltered than even Milford Haven, of which it put us all in remembrance.

"There she lies," said my master, pointing towards the entrance of the bay. "The stupid fellow of a captain had not wit to take enough coal to bring her in with him. If it be not, as I partly suspect, that finding it so calm that he could leave her in safety, he thought it a pity to spoil their show by bringing her in at dusk. To-morrow they mean to make more of towing in this prize of theirs than they did of New Year's Day, which was a dull affair here, very dull indeed after France. Now you shall hear all about her. Well, if you want to know, first, about my journey, you shall. I should have doubts about doing it again, that's all. Yet there has been some life in it! How is Lemaître? I hope he took care of you? Ah! I am glad he was not too much of the young Frenchman. Do you know he took me gravely to task for starting off to run into danger. A married man, even without children, should not, he said, face hazards like a bachelor. Well, I was so full of my object, that in spite of him it never came into my head that I was doing a hairbrained thing until I saw every one come from his lair to see

me off that morning. People are not apt to be so cordial so very early in the day unless they think you are going to risk your neck. I was thankful to see that you took it as a sign I was popular. When I could allow myself to look back, I was glad to remember that your face was not dismal. We soon left what seemed to me to be the highway for a rocky bridle-path (the landlord called it 'a road for partridges.') Not much can be said about going uphill through the snow, and we had nothing else until we came to a sort of farm-house, on the side of a steep hill. There our landlord seemed to be among friends. Our mules were put into a stable with a door so low that they could scarcely creep through it. We were offered some indescribable food, which I was hungry enough to eat with eagerness, and some very thin and dark wine, or cyder. We had an hour's rest, and then went on, the better for our halt, but into deeper snow, and on more doubtful tracks. We made but little progress. The guide and landlord were, from time to time, at fault to find which were the best paths. I knew just enough of Spanish to make out the bent of their frequent discussions, but not enough to judge for myself which of the two was the better man to follow. It was still worse when the mules grew puzzled. Sometimes the poor creatures would whinny in a most piteous bewildered manner, plainly telling us and each other that they had lost

their way. Our dread was that, at any moment, they might miss their footing. We were often on the edge of deep snow-drifts, or on paths where a few false steps might have plunged us into some ravine. For hours we did not see a house, nor a live man or woman. I say live, for passing along a very exposed hill-side, we came upon a poorly-dressed woman, lying in the snow, frozen to death. We saw she was past help, so we did not stop; nor even speak of her twice. Her case might be our own if we did not get off the hills before dark. The cold was intense. More than once we thought we should have been obliged to leave the mules behind, and walk for our lives, for the poor beasts became quite helpless when once the snow was above their bellies. I became too much benumbed to sit on my mule, and, when once I grew warm with walking, I dared not mount it again as my legs were wet and half-frozen. The snow was often over my knees, and sometimes up to my middle. The guide and landlord offered me bread, but would not give me any wine. I thought it hard to see them pull hard at the great old leathern bottle, but deny it to me. I pressed for some wine. They said they were used to it, but it was too cold for me; if I got chilled again, I should most likely not be able to go on. I could hold out better than they supposed, and I think I raised their notions of English muscles.

"At nightfall I was glad enough to find we were going downhill, and down. By degrees, we got upon a road where the snow lay less thick. It grew dark, and very cold. Never in all my days did I see the stars so bright. After many hours of walking, we reached, at seven in the evening, such another roadside inn as that where I left you, but with rather more of comfort about it. It had something of the look of an old English farm-house. There was a jolly great fire of wood burning on a hearth in a vast recess. On seats all round this fire sat a number of people, smoking and drinking. While they made me ready some food, I drew up to one of these men, a sailor, who had the air of a smuggler, because he had been in French ports and could speak a little French. After my supper, I went to bed (if bed it could be called), my companion, our landlord, sleeping in the same room. When I came to take off my wet clothes and give them out to be dried while I slept, I did not find my scanty luggage of much avail. I "composed" a night-shirt of a couple of towels, fringed deeply after the old fashion. The worst was the getting off my boots. You remember that I put on a pair of Wellingtons for the snow. I had to give them some nicks with a knife before they would leave go my legs.

"We slept soundly and long, knowing that we had gained Santander. Next morning we sent back our

guide. The landlord and I mounted fresh mules, and rode for Santander, pushing along at a good pace. We only stopped once, to bait our mules. We were there in eight hours, and found ourselves great heroes, for though there was the warmth of April on that New Years' eve at Santander, they knew by the snow they could see on the hills and the stoppage of all mails, that the weather must be at wild work in other quarters.

"I thought our landlord drove a hard bargain with me before starting, but I soon found it was not he who had the best of it. I liked him, and found him civil and helpful. As I had none but English money, I bade him ask the way to the hotel frequented by the French. He rode by my side to the Café Frances. There, at the door, stood one of Ernest's comrades, Pierre, our old *garçon*, from the hotel at Nantes. '*Tenez-ez! c'est M. Richard de Nantes!*' '*Ah! Pierre! c'est vous!*' You may guess that we were loving in a strange land. We both rose in rank in the hotel by vouching for each other. Pierre told the lady in the bureau that I was 'a most respectable Monsieur of his acquaintance, an *habitué* of his former hotel, well-known—ah! well-known, indeed, among the rich merchants of Nantes;' and she readily changed my money into Spanish gold. It chinked merrily in the pockets of my landlord as he rode away, joyful at having fairly earned so large a sum

as five pounds English by fulfilling his contract to take me safely, and in two days, to Santander.

"The next day was New Year's Day, and Sunday. I knocked up a few fellows from Nantes, and an Englishman or two who had come over to look after the gas-works, before I had my breakfast. I looked for letters at the Post Office, but found none as I had come the whole way in advance of the mails. There was no English service in the town, so I basked in the gentle warmth of what we should call a really fine spring day in England, resting my stiff and wearied limbs for some hours before presenting my letters of introduction.

"I found the Spaniard, who is consul for England, a courteous gentleman. All he could tell me, at the moment, was that the town of Santander was at loggerheads with that of Gijon about the very ship I had come to seek. He did not know the details of the dispute. It had been carried into the law-courts of Madrid. Now that I had come as an agent authorized to protect the interests of owners, he should at once proceed to obtain me more exact information. Next morning he was able to tell me that the derelict I sought was lying at no great distance off Gijon, which had nothing but an open roadstead. 'This,' said the consul, 'is the very gist of the matter. The fishermen of Gijon, who first descried her, had no steam-power to set in motion sufficient to bring her to their town, nor a harbour in

which she could lie safely had they been able to lay hold of her. So they stripped her of every thing hands could carry off, and left her, regretting they could not make her a prize. She might have sunk or gone to pieces on the rocks for them.

" 'In the meantime, the fishermen and steamboat-companies of Santander, hearing of this great ship, grew greedy. Wild rumours of a cargo much more valuable than timber prevail in this town. Every boat that could has been a little cruise to see her, and more than one attempt has been made to bring her off. They failed like the others for want of sufficient power. Gijon did not look with any pleasure on efforts sure to succeed if repeated with more means and management. Her fishermen let it be understood that they meant to keep their hold on her, with the help of the law, if needful. Gijon and Santander have put in their pleas at Madrid. The fishermen of Gijon claim to be her salvors. Those here who speculate on wresting her from them allege her to be free of their claims by default of power to secure her when she drifted their way. Besides, they aver that as it is where she lies, she impedes the traffic of Gijon such as it is. Let Santander have full powers granted, she will tow the timber ship into her fine and safe natural harbour. Santander, with its population of 16,000, will, I foretell, prevail over the 6000 of Gijon in the Madrid Court of Marine.

Meanwhile, all is at a standstill until orders come from the capital. They are expected with eagerness, but have been delayed by the same snow-storm which kept you back. It is better for you that this strife should have arisen. She might have gone to pieces, or been sunk on the roads had Gijon tried to tow her. On the other hand, you may find it much harder to settle matters should she be awarded to Santander. The men who are so keen to catch her expect to make as much out of her as if she were one of our old galleons. They give out that they shall claim from your English principals £3000 of salvage-dues; and there will be law expenses, and fees innumerable to be paid besides.'

"I held my tongue for some time, turning it all over in my mind. I could not tell a polite Castilian that it struck me he was describing the plans and actions of a pack of thieves. I asked him if anything had been noticed which would bring me nearer towards identifying the ship with that I seek? 'No name had been made out; but the captain of a steam-tug, who had gone to have a look at her, stated that she was of about 1000 tons burden, laden with long and great logs of Canadian timber.' This did not prove much for me. Still I believe her to be mine. I have scarcely a doubt of it in my mind, though up to this very moment, when she lies at the harbour's entrance, not a proof of it has come to my knowledge. Those wreckers of Gijon (I indulge myself

by, giving them their right name when I am not speaking to a Spaniard) so stripped her that not a mark to know her by has been seen except those letters, that L,—and E,— and A,—which might occur in *Fleur de Marie*, or in fifty names besides.

"I asked the consul if I could not go to Gijon for fuller news? 'The snow and ice on the hills would,' he said, 'make it a week's journey. Could I even reach it, he did not believe the mountains to be passable. There had, for some time, been no communication between the two towns, except by sailing vessel.' I have a great mind,' said I, 'to charter a steam-boat, go after her myself, and bring her in without any salvage at all. She is clearly free, for they saved no man's life. You know that captain and crew are all safe in England! I do think I will charter a boat!' 'So they fear,' said the consul, with a smile. 'It is in this morning's journal that a representative of the owners has arrived in the town. It is not through me that they know it; but they have made it out somehow. To-night, those who wish to grow rich on others' losses, hold a meeting to counteract any efforts you may make to recover your ship without paying her ransom. They have already met in haste to give pledges to one another that not a man among them all shall listen to any proposal you may make to hire steam-boat or sailing-vessel, except upon terms to be settled among themselves at this

night's meeting. I am told that when they have agreed on their charge, a message will be sent asking you to join them.' 'I shall take precious good care not to go near them!' 'That seems to me, Señor Don Juan, to be a course which a cavalier of your grace's prudence and knowledge of affairs will be certain to take. In my poor opinion, they desire to make you commit yourself, and compromise those whom you so worthily represent, by joining in their schemes to bring this abandoned vessel into Santander.' I thanked the courteous consul, and left him with vows, both loud and silent, that 'they should take her and keep her, and make what they could of her, before ever they saw me yield to pay them even one half of the money on which they were reckoning.'"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THEY did hold their meeting, they did ask me to join it, and, you may well suppose, I did not. It was far into the night before that thieves' council of theirs broke up. Finding I made no move to hire one of their steam-boats on the monstrous terms they had fixed, and bound themselves to exact from me, their next decision was to engage every steam-boat in the harbour on their joint responsibility, and be ready to start for the roads of Gijon so soon as letters should come from Madrid. The morning after their meeting in came the mail from Madrid. As the consul foretold, the larger and more powerful interests of Santander had prevailed. The prize was awarded to Santander, who was ordered to make ready her best boat and tow the derelict home to her harbour. By way of throwing a sop to Gijon, it was in the order that the salvage must be judged in the Court of Marine of that port. This, of course, was to give some people some fees. I may dispute the award of salvage and the fees of this court, for an appeal lies

to Madrid. 'How should you like to go to Madrid? That, or almost anything else, may be on the cards turned up. At present, I think I am sure not to appeal. What a stir there was in the town, when it was known that Santander had overcome Gijon! All was glee and bustle. One Frenchman, on asking of another, 'What was the cause of this great excitement?' was told, 'Apparently, monsieur, it is the Invincible Armada that is about to enter the port, bringing the spoils of London, and the Lord Mayor, and the Queen Elizabeth as prisoners. The news has made itself be waited for. There have been years, there have been storms. It is the more welcome!'

"For my own part I thought of Lemaîtres' saying, that in Spain 'the men of one parish were against the men of the next, the men of one province against those of the next, and all against the stranger.' Here were people who could never hope to be a penny the better off for the prize, thrilled with a savage joy that she was to be wrung from folks on the other side of the same province, as well as from the Englishman.

"I saw a fair chance that my claims would set me at feud with the whole town, and kept quite among the French, who stormed and sneered at the Spanish wreckers with a fervour beyond my own. They called another meeting, which they asked me to attend; stating that I should there be able to discuss the best plan of securing

the ship with the oldest and most experienced captains of, or at, Santánder, who had been specially invited to give their help in council. I said 'No' to them again, and went on waiting for results. It was settled that their best boat should leave as soon as she could be got ready—the sooner the better, for, with the thaw, the wind had gone round to the south-west, and it would be found much more easy to tow her with the wind behind her than, as they had tried before, with a contrary wind. All night they went on coaling her; in the early morning she started. The talk of the town was of the great quantity of coal put on board. The incompetent thieves, who do their work by halves; they took in just enough coal to fail them outside the harbour!

"It was rough weather while they were away. One night it blew a hurricane. A south-west wind, such as we had, makes it rough in the bay. Day after day I walked up to the Observatory which stands on the top of the hill between the town and the sea. Yesterday I thought that, as the wind had abated, we might see her in to-day. At noon a steamboat was signalled, supposed to be the *San Nicolás*, with the *Fleur de Marie*. A steam-tug went out to meet her, and, not long before you came, I, and others on the look out from the hill, could plainly see a steam-boat with another vessel of some sort. I thought there was little doubt they would enter on the tide to-night; but to the dismay of the town, and

my own vexation, the tug came back without the *San Nicolás*, and reported the *San Nicolás* as coming back without the timber-ship. The blundering booby of a captain had used up all his coal, and was obliged to leave her about three leagues off, at the mouth of the bay."

Later on that night we were told that the *San Nicolás* had come into dock. My master went with a great crowd that flocked to the quay. He was soon back with us. It was true that the *San Nicolás* had used up her coal, and left her prize outside. The night would be spent in laying in fresh coal, and the port had already put on its holiday suit of bunting.

Before full daylight Mr. Richards was up and off to the hill. With daylight he was back to our inn. We heard his voice ring through the house. We heard hearty laughter and clapping of hands, and a French attempt to give an English cheer. "She has slipped through their clumsy fingers!" he cried, "and is on her way to France!"

"Ah! the good French strain of our old colony," added a Frenchman; "it's very timbers spurn the Spaniard. Without a doubt she is drawn to her mother, France, this fair Canadian child!"

It was even so. My master, from the hill, saw harbour and shipping, mole and lighthouse, but the timber-ship was gone from the horizon. Calm as it

was within the haven at midnight, it had blown hard outside it, and she was gone without help or hindrance, who knew how or whither? None could tell if she had foundered, been dashed to pieces against some rock, been borne out to the Atlantic beyond reach, or drifted northwards along the coast, seeking the narrow seas which the French call La Manche, and we the English Channel. In the town there was angry talk that those robbers of Gijon had come by night and stolen her away. This rumour was sent abroad by the captain of the *San Nicolás*. Early in the morning he had gone out to fetch her; finding her gone, he settled to his own comfort that he must have been followed by the Gijon fishermen; but that had he found her where she was left, the sea was too rough to have allowed of his towing her that day to Santander.

Those who had looked to make money by her began to be aware this captain was a blockhead, and to count up how much coal his feeble, futile attempts to capture her had cost them. They thought it manifest that the strong wind blowing had drifted her northwards. This time they did not merely hold a council of captains; they put a council of the oldest and ablest on board the *San Nicolás*, and sent her off again by noon, with a companion-steamboat, the *Mercury*, in pursuit of the *Fleur de Marie*. This committee of captains had special orders, should they overtake the timber-ship in such a

gale as was blowing, not to attempt the bringing her back to Santander, but to make for the Pasages, the only harbour in Biscay which could receive a vessel of such a draught of water as the *Fleur de Marie.* There she could lie in safety until the wind blew for Santander.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Now, as my master came down the hill that morning she was missing, he met a French captain, who first gave him a notion which led him to alter his plan of waiting out the bustling comedy playing at Santander. This French captain told him that the wind which, during the night, had suddenly chopped round, was the very wind to take her to France. "Then to France I will follow her," said Mr. Richards. He visited everything French that floated in the harbour, holding his council of captains, like the others. They agreed in thinking that, with such a wind, she must, by this time, have been blown much too far out to sea for the Spanish steam-boats to reach her. They added, "That vessel will never be towed into a Spanish port." "Would she might go to France," said my master, "that would wipe out every Spanish claim! I might have endless trouble in their court of Gijon. Now my course, or duty if you will, is quite clear. I must follow her without further delay. I have found a little Biscayan barque (a *chasse-*

marée, as they would call it in France) of about thirty tons burthen. The captain is too small a personage, with too small a craft to have been secured by the 'Company of St. Nicholas,' in furtherance of their plans. He enters into mine, and we sail to-morrow, at daybreak. Should the wind keep in the same quarter, he can land me at San Sebastian before night. I go to see where she goes. My Basque captain, who has known this coast all his life, confirms my French friends. The same wind that would carry us to San Sebastian, would, he says, carry her clear off Biscay; and, if ever she be heard of again, it will be on the French coast. Now, I must be off to prepare protests to be lodged in the law courts—at Gijon, here, and at Madrid—against any claims of salvage, or any manner of meddling with that bit of British property, my ship. Ernest will do all other little bits of business I may have to leave behind me, and take care of you till we meet again. I will make it all right for him with Dennis. Indeed, Dennis sent him to help us in any way he could. You can all follow me to San Sebastian, when the road is open to the diligence. That must be in a few days, for I see no snow on the hills. There, I hope to meet you, but, if anything should oblige me to move on, I shall take care to leave you a letter."

Morning came with the right wind. It was between the dark and the daylight when we followed my master

to the quay. After one look at his little barque, my mistress said he was going to run worse risks than on his journey through the snow; that craft was much too small for the Bay of Biscay, with a gale blowing.

"She knows how to ply herself to the humours of the bay," said my master. I assure you I think myself safer on the sea than in this town. These fellows are furious. They are cursing what I call the luckiest of accidents! They really are a pack of thieves, and bungling thieves, too! No stepping into this barque without submitting my portmanteau to the Custom House? There, Ernest, take my keys, and let them upset it all."

This took some time, and my master paced the quay, stamping with his feet, partly to warm them, partly from restlessness like that of a horse, eager to start. To keep down our fears for him, he ran over his fears for his timber-ship. "If I could have got a bigger boat, belonging to some one uninterested in the prize, I would have chartered her out and out, and had a chase myself, and if I caught her, claimed her, for she must now be free. I begin to think my journey may now be fruitless, since through their clumsiness she was allowed to escape, and, perhaps, have been dashed on some rock or other, and there finished up."

Ernest now came out of the little custom-house with the portmanteau, which he put on board the barque. "The *douanier* seems civil," said my master, "it is a case

for a coin." He offered some Spanish piece of money to the man, who drew back, clearly not well-pleased. "I stand rebuked," said my master to us. "I never before had an offer of money refused at a custom-house. Mind, Ernest, that next time you or I find ourselves calling the Spaniards 'a gang of thieves,' or '*une nation de voleurs*,' we must pause for the sake of this fellow."

We watched his little boat set sails, and pass down the harbour, then we all went back to our inn. Ernest had, no doubt, been desired to keep us in good spirits. This time he could do it without much effort. He said fairly that never before had he been glad to part from Mr. Richards, now it was a relief to know him to be out of the town. The Corsairs were furious, and the citizens mortified at the loss of their show and ship. He brought us in each rumour as it rose. We were very glad of their groans and grumblings. What business had they to oppose themselves to an agent for securing the property of the legal owners of the *Fleur de Marie?* They must needs remember that timber-ship, if but one half of what was said in the town were true. Who would ever replace the money spent in pursuit of that ship? Rumour raised the cost of the coal alone to £500. We left coal costing 30*s.* a ton at Nantes, and found it much dearer at Santander, so that even after allowance for people's tongues making the most of things, they must have spent a good deal of money, without a plank to

show for it. Then there were the costs of going to law with their rivals of Gijon, and, beyond all, it was said they were in great fear that they might have made themselves responsible for the salvage-dues still claimed by Gijon. Murmurs arose against the management of their enterprise, curses on the ship for ever coming to their coast, and confessions of the wisdom of my master, who had watched and waited, spent no money, and admitted no claims.

Now, my master, though himself very apt to call them wreckers, robbers, and so forth, mostly checked others when doing so, and would say that, after all, they had the sanction of the law. They were salvors, for they were owned by the Court of Marine at Madrid; but had they been wreckers, pure and simple, they were not worse than some folks in other countries, not so far back; not much worse than some even now. The Cornish men had once borne a very bad name; there was a bit of Norfolk which had not a very good one a few years since; a part of the Irish coast, where they went a-wrecking whenever they got the good chance; so bad had it been on the coasts of Cardigan and Pembroke that, in 1817, good Bishop Burgess, of St. David's, desired that those of his clergy whose parishes lay on the sea-coast should preach once a quarter, to tell sermon-hearing Welshmen that to plunder wrecks was a sin and a shame. Still, though he quoted old laws

and new, this writer and that, I never could make out that salvage was, for the most part, anything but wrecking made legal. If it be fair that seamen or landsmen should be paid for their time, cost and trouble in saving your life, or that of your ship and cargo, and that they should be guarded against your taking their kind efforts as a matter of course, and sailing away, without giving them a penny for their pains, it surely is not fair that they should perform salvage on your ship and goods, whether you will or no; or, as in our case, plot and plan to prevent your own efforts to save your own property. No law would ever make right the wrong they tried to do the owners of the *Fleur de Marie.* My master left with Mrs. Richards a note-book in which he had kept a sort of journal, jotting down from day to day every twist and twirl things were taking, every turn they might take. Poor man, what a weary time he must have had before our coming! My mistress said it harassed her to read it. Her mind wearied with the strain on his to catch at every attainable bit of information, to forecast every accident that might occur, so as to be ready to shape all to the best end. It gave us a notion of how he had spent his days, turning over all things in his mind. It ran somewhat in this way:

"One-third value of ship and cargo claimed by Spanish law of salvage. About one-tenth in England,

though as much as one-half has been known to be awarded.

"If in tolerable condition, I might sell her to some one here, but then the navigation laws would come in, and lay so high a duty on a vessel of foreign build that no one would give much for her. I might hire something to tow her to an English port.

"If much knocked about, and I try to refit her, I have my choice between paying duty on every sail and rope brought from England, or paying enormous prices for the bad articles of Spain.

"People about to make railway, very keen after timber.

"Timber abounds on these mountains about Santander, but it is cheaper to bring it from the Baltic than down from the mountains.

"Suppose her to be so battered that I have to re-ship the timber? Better to bring a ship from Nantes or Bordeaux than hire anything here."

Where was he all the time my mistress watched the weather, and looked in vain for letters; where was he, and where was the ship?

CHAPTER XXX.

WHAT very old towns they seem to have in France and Spain! I never heard of any so ancient in England! Santander, which the Spaniards tell you, was founded by Noah himself, must, of course, take the lead of Nantes, which was only set agoing by one of his grandsons. It would seem that, after the flood had abated, Noah cruised about in the ark founding a few towns to make up for some of those washed away. At his age, he most likely did not care to cross the Bay of Biscay, so sent a younger man on to found Nantes. If there had been any left alive in the neighbourhood of Santander, I feel sure they would have given Noah a great deal of trouble by claiming salvage-dues for the ark, and its miscellaneous cargo.

Santander was pronounced by Ernest to be "a town wherein one might exist." This meant in his French mouth that you could find some *cafés* in it, and shops with toys from Paris, and a few Frenchmen with whom to smoke, sigh for France, and sneer at Spain. What I

saw was a fishy old town, and a Frenchified new one, with bustling quays, spotted and dotted with bales of merchandise, and barrels of flour and sugar. Porterage was claimed as the right of women, who put me in mind of the dames of the quay at Boulogne. Since I was there, I hear that the railway to bring corn from the Castilles for export to Cuba has been made, but, in the year of which I write, for all the want of railways, Santander was doing a brisk trade with England, as well as with her own colony; and I never ceased to wonder at the strings of carts laden with flour, which came down the hill by hundreds, creaking and screeching so that you could hear them when they were still miles away from the port. No noise I had ever heard was at all like theirs. There are French noises and Spanish noise. One that you do not hear in France is the endless ric-rac, ric-rac of the ladies' fans as they sit in church, fanning themselves slowly and in measure with a ceaseless see-saw of the fan, but scarce a sign of movement of the hand.

Rain is the drawback of Santander. Even after living at Nantes, you think it a rainy place—a warm, wet town. It is windy besides. There are pretty views from the hill above the headland at the end of which the town is built. We used to walk there between showers, for we had very stormy weather while my poor master was away, and no news of him.

Just as Ernest said we could travel, and had taken our places to San Sebastian, the *San Nicolás* came into harbour, having gone as far as the Bay of Pasages without seeing or hearing of the timber-ship. The hopes of the town fell flat. Ernest said he was glad to have seen the long faces of the corsairs before turning his back on their town. "I fear," said my mistress, "we none of us mind Mr. Richards, who told us not to give them hard names." "Our hardest, Madame," pleaded Ernest, "are gentle to what they give your English nation. Beyond even those of the next town and the next province, they hate and speak ill of the English."

On reaching San Sebastian, we found that my master had left for Bayonne after waiting two days to learn the result of the search for the ship. We went to the post-office, and found a letter for my mistress stuck with those awaiting other strangers in a shallow box with a glass face, like a case for butterflies. In this way, every one had the advantage of seeing the letters of every one else, and much ease in obtaining them, if supposed to be valuable. In fact, the only letter for my master which reached Spain while he was in that country, was asked for in his name at the Santander post-office, and given up, to a friend on the look-out for his coming, to a rival for his ship who wished to learn his instructions,—who could tell?

His letter had been begun on his first day of waiting. "San Sebastian.—I was two days in coming here, being hindered by very rough weather. Nothing heard of *Fleur de Marie*, either here or at Pasages. If afloat after such a storm as we weathered, she must be off the French coast; so they say here. From the look-out at the top of the fort, they have observed a steam-boat searching, I hold myself ready to leave at a moment's notice." On the next day he had closed his letter, adding, "I am just returned from the lighthouse near the citadel. About 9 A.M. a steam-boat in sight, fifteen miles distant from the land, she was just disappearing, steering due east. It was clear she was searching. She had no vessel in tow. Clearly it was that best boat sent out from Santander. Here they tell me that, if not met with by the next day after she vanished, the derelict has ere now reached the French coast, or found another current, and drifted out of reach of Spaniards. So said the captain of my barque. To-day, I am here—to-morrow at Bayonne. I have hopes. It would be a bad business to lose ship and all. I still hope not. The snow is fast disappearing, though the mountains are white. Rest, then follow me to Bayonne."

We cared more to meet him than to rest at San Sebastian. Before leaving, however, we did go to Pasages to see the famous boatwomen. I must say we thought them more like the viragos on the quays of

Boulogne and Santander, than the charming damsels of Madame d'Aulnoy.

Then, journeying up hill and down dale, through a country like Wales, we reached Bayonne, and were glad to know ourselves in France. This time we had no motive for lodging at the posting-inn, where they spoke Spanish only. We found my master among the French, still without news of the ship, still ready and alert to follow events.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"You know," said Mr. Richards, "that I left with the wind in my favour, my captain in spirits, and our noble crew of one man and one boy secure of running into San Sebastian that evening. Ours was a queer little craft. The man who steered stood in a sort of wooden well, and what they called a cabin was a little affair at the stern, more like a cupboard for food than a cabin for a passenger. I used to look down into it with amusement, when the captain took off the hatch, and dived down an arm or a leg to get up some biscuit. The other part of the barque was given up to his little freight, the wine or what not with which he plied his little commerce between Santander and San Sebastian. So soon as we were fairly out to sea, I watched the care with which the captain put the hatch on the little cabin. It meant just what it means when the steward of the steam-boat goes round, closing the port-holes. Then, Anne, you ladies lift languid heads, and ask, 'Is there any danger?'

"It was a rough run, I can tell you; somewhat of a race for our lives. There's a wreck lying now on this same nasty bar of Bayonne, that came to her bad end by the storm our little thing ran through. So long as we had the wind at our back we did well, all but our wet jackets. We kept near the coast, passing point after point which did so put me in mind of Devonshire. There were fields tilled to the water's edge, and green-topped headlands, and low, luxuriant wooded cliffs. We, now and then, shipped a sea. How sea-sick I might have been if I had not been so keenly on the look-out for my ship! This was our good time; to-towards noon, the sea became very rough, and our gusts of wind squalls. Our rough before would have been smooth now. There was nothing for me but to help as I could in reefing every bit of canvas before each squall burst over us. The captain took the helm, and stuck to it, bidding us furl every sail each time he saw a squall coming. We were up to our knees in water. When our lithe and lissom little barque had danced through it, we opened the bulwarks to let the water run off, and, by shifting of chains, trimmed her to set sail again.

So we bent her to the wind, many times and for hours, until my captain began to consult with his one sailor in the storm, just as my landlord did with our guide in the snow. They spoke Basque, but they made me aware, in their broken French, that they must give up San

Sebastian, and run for the little port of Santoña, to wait till the wind had abated. Our brisk little barque took us in, and, upon my word, though it was Spanish soil, I was heartily glad to set my foot on it.

I found myself a little lion in the little town; first, for sailing in such a storm, then, for being a foreigner, such being scarce birds at Santoña. I soon settled myself in a little inn, and picked up an officer or two who spoke some French. They asked me to go to a play, acted that night by their regiment; I was willing enough to go with them. The play was one we saw at Nantes last winter; I cannot think of the name, but there were two young lads in it, whom some one wanted to murder. What struck me was that, at Nantes, they were rescued at the last moment, to suit the French taste, but, at Santoña, they stifled them outright, to suit the Spanish. They all acted well enough, for amateurs.

Early next morning, while it was quite dark, the captain came knocking at my bedroom door. The wind had changed a little in our favour, and he wished to sail at once. I was quickly on board; we set sail, and had a run as delightful as that of the day before had been the reverse. We scarcely hauled down a sail the whole day. Though it was late in the evening when we reached San Sebastian, I managed to find the English consul, procure from him the names of all the ship-brokers in the place, and engage him to set about making inquiries for me.

Next morning I found all the brokers, and asked them and the people at the custom-house all the questions that came into my head. Finding nothing was known of my ship, I came on to Bayonne, and have gone through the same process. Consul, custom-house, and brokers, they all agree that, if still floating, she must have gone northwards, and that, should the *San Nicolás* have found her, she could not have taken her Spainwards, but must have put into a French port. That would make a pleasing complication, as the salvage would then be awarded by French law, which would deal more lightly with me than the Spaniards would at all approve. I must wait here for a day or two, to see if any news of her can be picked up. After that, I shall go on to Bordeaux; for I have a foreboding that, with the wind setting that way, and the high sea running, she must have been blown to the coast somewhere about Cape Bréton. I should not wonder if our first news of her should come from England. Lloyd's are likely to hear sooner than we are.

CHAPTER XXXII.

On the next day came news, such as we called bad when we heard it.

"Report to the Custom-House at Bayonne, from the Coast-Guard at Cape Bréton."

[I think I had better allow French method and order to tell their own tale in their own tongue].

"Cap Bréton, 13 Janvier,
"184–.

"Monsieur l'Inspecteur Principal,

"J'ai l'honneur de vous informer que dans la nuit du 10 ou 11 courant la mer fortement agitée par un grand Vent du Sud a jété sur les côtes de Lit et de Vielle environ 350 à 400 pièces de bois de Sapin du Nordéquarissant de 30 à 45 centimètres chacune, et ayant une longueur qui varie de 8 à 15 mètres, ainsi que les débris d'un navire.

Ces pièces de bois portent isolément les trois marques suivantes—

DM. EE AVD N° 1.

"Les débris du Navire, dont j'ai vu les tronçons de deux mâts, indiquent qu'il était d'une grande capacité. Le tableau trouvé sur la côte de Vielle répresente une—"

"There we have her!" cried my master, throwing up his hands; "her stern-board, or *picture* (as they call it), represents a great white lily, with gilded leaves, the flower of Mary. Strange that I never could make out from those Spaniards that she 'bore a lily.' It was not even named in the notes to know her by, which they gave me in London; though I have these brands on the timber. I cannot see the inspector until the afternoon, so I must now go and learn what forms I must fill up, and all I have to do in claiming my ship."

For once, the forms were few and simple. It cost less trouble to claim that cargo than to recover Mrs. Smith's few pounds of tea at Boulogne. All the papers needed were the invoice and bill of lading, certified by the French consular agents of the towns in England where the owners were living, and procurations from each of them enabling Mr. Richards to act. The inspector was able to give my master fuller details from a private letter. Some days before the coast-guard had watched a great vessel, far out at sea, rolling in great troughs. It had no sails set, and seemed to be under no guidance. On its drifting nearer to their coast, they feared the crew must have been lost, as there appeared to be no hands on board. It broke up at night,

strewing the coast between Moliets and Lit, a distance of five miles, with huge pieces of timber and fragments of the hull.

"Now for another journey," said Mr. Richards. "This time, it is into Lalor's country, where they walk on stilts. Like him, I have picked up a man who will ride with me for the fun. I shall be three or four days in going and returning. The spot is about fifty miles from Bayonne. For twenty out of the fifty we must ride or walk through sand, on the crossest of cross-roads. They tell me that it is the most horrid hole along the coast. No ship can approach it, so how I am to take away my timber I cannot contrive. My present impression is that, as my logs are now lying among honest people, I shall put the whole concern into the hands of the French Customs'-officers, and leave them to dispose of it, and make me what money they can."

He was gone again, leaving us to the care of Ernest. That young man took pains to point out to us daily, that so good was French ground, that even to be wrecked on it, like the *Fleur de Marie*, was a luckier lot than to lie afloat off Spain. This, so far as concerned the ship and her cargo, no one was disposed to question. Nothing struck us more than that not merely was there no attempt at Bayonne to raise a doubt of my master's claims, but that there was a great zeal to

forward them; an eagerness to give him advice and assistance.

Bayonne is a good town to stay in if you want to make pictures of distant mountains. Mountains in January are better at a distance. It has a great name, besides, for the export of hams, but that old custom is gone out which so much surprised Madame d'Aulnoy, namely, that when the ladies of the town ("lively of wit, amiable and caressing in manner, and with brilliant eyes") came, as was the custom of the country, to wait on her as a new-comer, some of them carried under one arm, as if it were a lap-dog, a dear little sucking-pig, very cleanly washed, and wearing a collar of divers-coloured ribands. When they danced the *branle* in a circle, to the sound of flute and tabor, they were forced to put down these sweet little pigs, which then ran about the room, making music after their own manner.

On the evening of the day he had named, Mr. Richards came riding up the street. His face was more than sun-burned. It was bronzed by the January sunshine shining on sand.

"Lalor told you something of it," said he. "In a few hours you quit the high road and get among plantations of cork-trees, which go with you all the way to Lit. As soon as we could we got a guide to take us over the waste of sand. Towards the sea it is an almost trackless expanse of sand, and "Lit" means

literally *lit*, a bed of sand on the coast, in which I found my great pieces of timber, weighing from two to five tons, bedded, forty yards from the sea-line. It would take some force to move them from that shelving bank of sand. It was my storm from Santander to Santoña that shoved her on that shelf.

"I took letters from the inspector here to the Customs' people there. I was well received. Every one was eager to help me. The interest they took in my account of how I had been handled in Spain was intense, so was the glee that, now, no Spaniard could have a tittle of a claim on her; and all was only surpassed by the anguish of the head man, that the poor peasants of the Landes should have pilfered some of the copper-bolts, which had been washed ashore in fragments of the wreck. I believe, after all, the Gijon fellows got off most of her iron and copper. One droll thing is that, now the ship has gone to pieces, the only things in which her underwriters are interested are these same copper and iron bolts and nails which may turn up on the coast. So my friend put on some extra hands, and set a guard along the coast to watch the timber, and collect such fragments as may yet be cast ashore. The value of copper and iron is so great down there in the desert, that these bolts will easily pay the wages of the men who collect them, and their own safe storing in *entrepôt*. I wish I could say as much for my pieces of

pine and oak, and planks of deal (hundreds more have been found since the coastguard wrote). Where, however, you have thousands of acres of sand covered with one vast forest, the value of wood is merely nominal. Re-shipping it, unless at Bayonne, is out of the question. We did talk of procuring saws to cut the pieces into two, as they are much too heavy for the poor carts and poorer roads of the Landes; but I saw a contractor at Moliets, and got from him that the value of each piece of timber, where it lies, is about ten *francs*, and that the cost of bringing it to Bayonne would be fifty. Besides, it would take at least two months to convey it here, if it ever got through the sand at all.

"Well, it is now handed over to law and order. Do you know those Gijon fellows had tried to burn her, rather than let her be taken to Santander? We found many of the pieces of timber charred in places. They had left us nothing but the brands on the timber, and on the top of a barrel to know her by, but there can be no doubt she is the *Fleur de Marie*, for we found the great gilded pot of white lilies with golden leaves. I mean to have it framed, for a memorial of our Spanish journey, and to give it to Mary on her marriage. I must tell you a trait of France. My head man, when I asked if the *tableau* did not represent the *Fleur de Marie*, would not own that he knew anything about Mary's flower. "It is a *fleur-de-lys*," said he. "But," said I, "is

it not the *Fleur de Marie*, as you see it in the churches?" "I do not know, monsieur, it is a *fleur-de-lys*." He knew as well as I do, as well as Ernest does, Mary. Ernest is another young Frenchman, and all he will admit is that he believes there is some such expression used among the *dévots* and the *dévotes*.

"There, Anne, your brother's safe, at any rate. The underwriters cover his loss, and we hand them the copper-bolts. Some one else will make up their loss some day soon. There remain the owners and the underwriters of the cargo. If they listen to me, I shall send a man down from Nantes, who knows the forms of the French customs, and have the timber sold by auction on the sand where it lies. Such a sandy waste it was in these Lower Landes! There is a district more cultivated. I did not see any shepherds on stilts; nothing but sand, and fir-trees, and cork-trees. Firs are largely planted, and are to be seen in different stages of growth, but the cork-trees are the oldest inhabitants. The few poor villages you see at different points are just among the 'clearings' of the cork-trees, and show where they are stripping bark off the old trees, or planting new. There, among scattered huts, we found little inns, where they would lodge us *à pied et cheval*. They were not much better than our Spanish pot-house; but, Ernest, I make you a present of my opinion that they were on the good ground of the honestest country of which I know anything."

The facts of the pursuit of the *Fleur de Marie* warranted, nay, demanded, our praise of France. No claim was ever made for salvage, or anything else. A five-pound note cleared every customs' charge for setting a guard along the coast and taking the care of the timber until it was sold by auction on the shore. It was bought by railway-people from Bayonne, and, much to our surprise, fetched as good a price as it would have done in England. To this day, I keep the *tableau* in my own little parlour. I call it the *Fleur de Marie*, but Ernest, the *Fleur de Mariette*. Mr. Richards had letters from Santander, telling him that such had been the fury to seize that ship that, had she broken up on the shore of Spain's little neighbour, Portugal, she would, without doubt, have been claimed from that small state as a Spanish prize. France is no *petit compagnon*, so that all talk of urging such a claim on her was soon silenced.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THERE was no need now for us to remain at Bayonne. We went back to Nantes, with Ernest in our company. Mr. Dennis had desired him in a letter (which sanctioned all he had done in my master's service) to proceed to Nantes, and help his sister in her preparations to join him in Spain. Mr. Dennis was about to settle at Santander while making the railway, and would require Ernest to conduct Miss Dennis and the children into Spain. When Mr. Dennis had a house, and his sister to keep it, Ernest was not likely to be wanted. Thus we began to talk of how we were to earn our living when married, as was soon to be our case.

It had often been my chance to hear Mr. Richards complain that there were no furnished lodgings in Nantes to which he could, with propriety, recommend his friends to take ladies. All the *chambres garnies* were what the Frenchmen call *libres*. A Frenchman comes to look at your rooms; he like them, and agrees to your terms; then, just at the last, he says, "*Madame, ces*

chambres sont-elles libres?" This means, is he at liberty to bring in people who are much too *libres*.

It had struck me, seeing how many English people and Germans sent their sons to Nantes to learn French, and a business of some sort, that here was an opening for any one who would maintain good order in her house. Parents who did not care to pay the higher terms asked for boarding in private families, were likely to be pleased to place them in such well-managed lodgings. When my master was told of my project, he said: "Mary has a good eye for business. It is the very thing that is wanted in the town. I shall yet see her on the Bourse, doing a little in corn." This, however, has not come true, for even if I had the skill or the wish to speculate with my savings, not so very long ago the men excluded all the women from the Bourse, making a special order that a most worthy old female dealer from the country—who sells much of the corn of the Lower Loire, and knows how to bargain with the best—should, with her daughter, be at all times free to enter.

My master was so often asked where he would advise young men to be lodged, that as Ernest as well as I had saved money, he said he had no doubt of our success, and promised us a present of furniture. It would appear, then, that we had nothing to do but to get married. People in England, who put up their banns, or buy their licences, have no notion of what a trouble

it is to get married in France, above all, if one of the pair be a foreigner.

If one of us had been a Protestant, matters would have been still worse, but as it was the Church gave us no trouble. The State seemed to have nothing else on hand but our wedding. It might have the kind wish to make it very binding, past man's power to sever, but its good intentions took the form of raising countless obstacles which we must remove. First of all, I must produce an attested copy of my baptismal register. Now, I did not know where I had been baptised, but I screwed up my courage to ask my brother, who was older than myself, if he knew. I told him in my letter that it was needed for my marriage with a young man who was approved by my master and mistress. I said, I was sorry we had ever disagreed, and hoped we should be kind friends in future. He replied, that he never would help me to marry a Frenchman. If I chose to do so, I might cease to consider him my brother. He added, that he was now the only brother left me, and the head of my family.

We are commanded to obey our parents, but I never learned in my catechism that we must obey our brothers. Of course, his letter made me a little more bent on marrying Ernest. On my master asking if I had no other relation who would be more good-natured, I thought of a female cousin whom I had not seen for

years, and, by his advice, wrote, asking her to procure me a copy of my register, as well as of the marriage certificate of my father and mother, which was sure to be required. By great good luck, she knew where to ask for them, and they were duly attested and forwarded to me.

We now thought that all must be at an end; for, as both my parents were dead, their formal written consent (which, though I was twenty-five, it was needful for me to demand, as a matter of respectful observance towards them), could not be put into the long list of papers indispensable if you desire to contract a civil marriage. Not at all. If my father and mother were dead, I must obtain certificates of their death and burial, and the written consent of such of my grandfathers and grandmothers as might still be alive. All were dead but my father's mother. Then I must produce certificates of their death and burial, and of her consent. I had never seen her, and did not know where she lived, except that it was somewhere in Ireland. Again, I applied to my cousin, who gave me the address. My master was kind enough to write to the priest of the place, asking for my grandmother's written consent, or her burial-certificate. All these papers were got together in time, but there was a great deal of letter-writing about them, and many delays. While they were slowly being brought together, a year went by. In that time I

went to England with my master and mistress, and Ernest into Spain with Miss Dennis and the children.

Besides these papers which I can call to mind, there were others required, of what nature I forget, but which seemed to us both needless and vexatious. If we had waited till all were in order, we might have been unmarried to this day; but the English Consul (who had all along acted for me as if I were his own child), himself lost patience, and going to the *Mairie*, told the *Secrétaire*, that he was prepared to certify, on the part of the British Government, that every one of my relations had been baptised, married, given his or her consent, died, and been buried, as the particular form in question might require, in order to avoid any further trouble, delay, and expense in sending about the country for certificates. "Messieurs," said the Consul, "I will certify that the whole family have been hanged, if you like." They laughed, and gave in. Then I had to procure from the Commissary of Police proof of my actual residence in France. The last stage of all was, that my name and that of Ernest were stuck up on the door of the *Mairie* for eleven days. The Consul did all for nothing, putting all the seals required on each paper of a great packet, which he himself left at the *Mairie*.

So soon as our way was clear, we hired an *apartement*, and prepared it for my master and mistress, who were

to be our first lodgers. We were to be married from my master's lodgings, and he had promised us a good dinner at a *restaurant*, and my mistress a dance in her own drawing-room. When all was settled and smoothed, what does Ernest do but conjure up a new trouble. It concerned his conscience—a sort of conscience he has which I tell him turns the wrong way. When any of his comrades wish to tease him, they put him in mind that he was once a pretty young thurifer, swinging his incense in a church which he might hope one day to serve as priest, for an old aunt of his in the country was ready with her savings to place him in the Seminary. Ernest had changed as boys do change in France. He has never been aught but gentle, kind, and steady since I have known him, nor do I think he has forfeited his faith, for he has always taken great pains to teach his own boys their catechism, and he grieves when they go the way of other French boys,—as he went himself.

There is a French public opinion among most youths and men which constrains them all to be more ashamed of any show of religion than of any sin. Ernest was much better than most of the young men, for he did not sneer, but tormented himself in a serious way. He almost fretted himself into a fever because he must go to confession, and obtain a ticket from a priest to show that he had been, before we could be married. He hinted that the marriage by the *Maire* was the legal

union—the only one needed. I, however, was not going to put up with that, and he himself admitted that it was not considered respectable, though that he thought mere prejudice. So I heard of that no more; I was sorry for him, though I could not enter into his scruples. Biddy tried to put things straight by telling him he might go to a bad priest she had heard of, who would sell him the ticket without requiring his confession. "I do not believe any Frenchman, even if he were a priest, would do such a thing!" said Ernest, angrily; "and I know no young fellow base enough to buy his ticket. It might be so if it were in Spain. I remember M. Lemaître telling me one night, as we sat by the brazier in that inn, '*Mon ami*, if I were about to marry myself, and must go to the *confesse*, I would come into this country for the transaction. Between two cigarettes all would be arranged, with four between me and the priest it would be even comfortably arranged.'"

The end of it was that Ernest went to his mother's parish-priest, who had known him from a child. He left the town very resolute and very wretched. He did not approach the confessional, but hung about the church until he could follow the priest into the sacristy.

"What brings you here?" said the priest, who had heard he was about to marry.

"I am come, Monsieur, because I cannot help myself. I am going to be married, and I want my ticket of

confession. I will never kneel down before a man; I do not mean to confess; I have lived like the rest; I have done all that a young man does."

"My son," said the priest, slightly smiling, "You have made a very full confession. Here is your ticket; do not prevent your wife from going to mass."

"On my faith, Monsieur," replied Ernest, taking his ticket with a bow of thanks, "she may go to mass every day of her life if she chooses."

When I asked for my ticket, my confessor gave me a little playful scolding: "I told you not to marry, but to wait till you were old enough to keep my house, and this is all the account you make of my advice."

We were, like other people, first married at the *Mairie*, then at church. Biddy would have liked to arrange a procession after the church-marriage, bearing the presents (or *vaisselle*, as they say), to our dwelling to the sound of music. This we thought only suited to folks much poorer than ourselves, and it is fast going out even among them. My master gave Ernest's family and our friends an excellent dinner, and provided good musicians for our ball in the evening. He and my mistress, dressed for a grand ball at the Préfecture, passed through the drawing-room before they went, speaking to each of the guests, and wishing them a merry evening. They were very gay, and dancing was kept up until after two o'clock in the morning, when

they all went home, marching hand in hand through the streets, singing at the top of their voices—

"Jamais, jamais en France,
L'Anglais ne régnera!!!"

When I heard of this, I was disposed to resent their choice of a song, but Ernest assured me that they merely chose it because it was the newest thing from Paris—the rage of the day. At Ernest's village in the country his family, after their return from Nantes, kept our wedding with all manner of strange carryings-on of their own. The only custom I could enter into with much interest was that the marriage of the son of the house was told with great form to the bees. Every one in the north of England knows that if family events are not made known to the bees, they take such offence that they fall ill, and sometimes even die of pure vexation. Ernest's mother hung all her hives with scarlet cloth on our wedding-day, which was pretty and proper.

I have never repented of my marriage. As for Ernest, he has not forgotten how to pay me compliments though he now, for the most part, puts them into the mouths of our children. Only the other day I found a nice piece of paper I had laid aside for wrapping up some cutlets I was going to fry, scribbled all over with rough draughts of a compliment on my birthday, to be learned by heart and repeated by my youngest boy. "Dear *Maman*,

I have nothing to offer you but a flower and a good intention, but both, you may be sure, are given from my heart. I know very little as yet, but I desire to give you a proof of my affection by learning a little English, that I may tell you in your own language, on your next fête-day, how much I love you, how willing I am to obey you."

Our lodgings thrive, Ernest has a *restaurant* of his own, where Biddy reigns over the pots and pans of the scullery. At his *restaurant* my lodgers, for the most part, dine. I look after their linen, can make them a good cup of coffee if they wish it, and keep their rooms in English order without the help of a servant. In France, a lodging-house servant is often a spy, and I do not choose to have the doings of my lodgers, and the sayings of Ernest and the boys, reported to the police. I think it rather hard to pay £4 a year for a licence to let lodgings, and a tax on my wearing apparel, and that of Ernest—but no one loves rates and taxes, much less those of a new kind. My master and mistress have lodged with me again and again, and always bring me good luck. They wear their age well, but then, as Biddy says, they are "so good at the heart." Mr. Lawson is lodging with me now. He looks no older than when I first saw him. He is still much taken up with the Druidical stones of Brittany, and in

great spirits because some one has found out that there is a tribe in India, which at this moment sets up *Menhirs* and *Dolmens*. It seems some one is going to ask them why they do it, "and then," says Mr. Lawson, "we shall know why they did it at Carnac."

Biddy's boys are always getting into trouble, but then they are always getting out of it again. Once, since my marriage, Biddy has had a letter from her husband. At the request of a French priest, a priest in America found Michael Noonan, and wrought upon his conscience to send his deserted wife and children a hundred francs, and a promise of more money before long to pay their passage to the United States. Biddy, poor soul, was wild with delight, and went about showing the fair words and the francs to all her friends and favourers, and, I might add, to all those foes of hers, who taunted her with her husband's desertion. From that day to this she has had no more money from him, nor another letter, and prays one hour that some one will "shake up Noonan's conscience," and the next, that some one may give him "a good bating of the back." This she does from habit, for she is quite settled, and at ease.

The last time Mr. Richards was at Nantes, he asked me "if, in all these long years, I had never heard of my brother?" I told him that I had not, but that I had long been haunted by a wish to try him again with

a letter. "Write it," said he, and so I did, without telling Ernest, for fear my brother might give me another rebuff. The return of the post brought me so kind an answer, that, as I read it all the way upstairs, I did not know where I was going, and sank on my knees on the landing, sobbing aloud.

Ernest ran upstairs in great alarm, exclaiming, "*Ma femme, es-tu folle?*" When I could, I spoke, and told him that my brother was married, and prosperous; that he wrote kindly, in great gladness at hearing from me. He had often sent me messages by sailors in vessels bound for Nantes, but telling them my maiden name, which was all he knew, they always came back to him with the report that they could hear of no one of the name in Nantes. He said that my letter was, to him, like the bringing of one dead to life again, for he had quite given me up. I must visit him, and see his wife and children. If I could not go to him, he must come to me.

Ernest was very much pleased, and said so, but he was also in alarm on seeing me greatly excited. He kept saying, in a soothing manner, "Mariette, I counsel thee to go to mass." I took his advice. That night I lay down without a sore feeling in my heart. The first thing I said to Ernest in the morning was, "I have made up my mind to pay my brother a visit." Ernest, who is tired of his old travels, and now wonders that

he ever should have left France, made no reply. "I mean to go to England," said I. Ernest raised himself, and turned so as to have a steady look at me, then said, "*Ma femme, effectivement, tu es folle!*"

For all that, I went, and was very happy on my visit; and, as things grow dear in France, if I found a good opening, I am not at all sure that I would not bring off him and my lads to settle in some English town.

THE END.

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